



UNIT-6

Planning for the Big Day

Learning Outcomes

- ✓ The Importance of Site Layout
- ✓ Exploring Characteristics of Wedding Venues
- ✓ Identifying Venue Layout Requirements

Unit 6

Planning for the Big Day

Layout of Site

A reception may be formal or casual. It may be simply elegant. It all depends on the individual couple. Regardless of the reception venue setting, your goal is to make sure it is in line with the theme, formality and style of the wedding.

Selecting the Venue

There are so many options to choose from when deciding on a wedding venue, from outdoor marquees to elegant mansions. You must carefully consider the chosen style, the mood, and the formality of the event when considering how to turn the venue into the perfect site for an individual couple's taste. Think about whether or not the couple want a casual cocktail-type event or a more formal dinner.

After the reception style has been decided, it is time to begin looking for the most appropriate venue. Browse through lots of wedding magazines, the Internet, and local phone books.

It must be noted that, from here on, everything you plan will probably be influenced by the reception venue, its location and its style. For example, if the couple have chosen a grand mansion to hold their reception, it may not necessarily fit in with a casual beach-themed ceremony or vice versa.

Take time to carefully consider all options and visualise the ideal outcome in your mind. This is beneficial when choosing a venue as it helps you select the venue that fits best with your ideas for the wedding.

Inspecting Reception Venues

When you've located a few potential venues, pick up the phone and organise appointments to personally inspect them. It is a good idea to select three to five venues, if possible. It is highly inadvisable to book any venue without first inspecting it. Photos in magazines and on the Internet often look impressive; however, appearances can sometimes be deceptive.

Don't rush through when inspecting a venue. Take your time. Take the size, cleanliness, layout, lighting, furnishings, gardens, any special features and, of course, the overall ambience into account. Ask lots of questions and make sure you write everything down.

Questions for the Reception Venue

Before setting off to inspect the venues, make sure you have a list of important questions to ask the venue operators. Ensure you have a clear idea of the type of style you want in a reception centre, such as buffet, sit-down dinner, cocktail event etc., how many guests are likely to attend, the wedding budget, a rough estimate of the date, and any particular requirements for the reception.

You should feel sufficiently comfortable to ask as many questions as necessary during the inspection. The list below can be used to assist you:

- How many guests can the venue accommodate?
- What style of reception does the venue cater for (buffet, sit-down dinner, cocktails, etc.)?
- Can you have exclusive use of the venue or will you have to share it with any others (before, during or after your particular reception)?
- Does the venue you're inspecting provide beverages and food, or will a caterer be required?
- Will the venue provide the waiting staff?
- Are all the furnishings, crockery, cutlery etc. provided by the venue?
- What is included in the venue's wedding packages? This must be very precise.
- Do any special offers come with the venue's wedding packages, such as reduced prices for off-peak, Sunday or winter weddings?
- Can you alter the packages to suit your clients' individual needs?
- If alcohol is provided, is the cost based on the amount consumed or the number of guests? Does this also include spirits?
- Does the venue provide cake cutting and serving and is it included in the package? Will you need to provide the cake stand, the knife or the cake bags?
- Does the venue make allowances for any special dietary requirements such as gluten-free or diabetic meals?
- Can the venue offer reduced-cost meals for the photographer, the band members, or children?
- Are there any other expenses you should be made aware of?
- Are optional extras available such as extra time, extra courses, any upgrades for wines etc.?
- Is an Emcee (Master of Ceremonies) included?
- Will the venue provide decorations such as chair covers, table settings, candelabras etc.? If not, are they able to set them up if you provide them?
- Is a dance floor available?
- Is any entertainment included in their package? Will there be any specific restrictions or requirements if you arrange the entertainment? This would include any noise restrictions.
- How long will the reception run, and if it runs overtime will there be any extra fees?
- What time does the venue close?
- Is a bridal room available for the bridal party throughout the reception?
- Does the venue have proper heating and/or air-conditioning?
- Are there cleaning requirements or costs associated with holding a reception there?
- When are the deposits, the instalments and any final payments due? How much will they be exactly?
- Are there cancellation fees?

Further Considerations

You may also like to think about the following:

- Is the cost of the chosen venue within the budget?
- Does it fit the theme and style of the wedding?
- Is the venue available on the chosen wedding date?
- Do any areas at the venue provide good photo opportunities?
- Is the venue near the ceremony venue and the photography location(s)?
- Is it easily accessible for guests?
- Are the staff experienced and professional, and do you warm to them?
- Is the venue layout suitable for your entertainment/band or other aspects of your reception?
- Is the venue suitable for all types of weather?
- Are the venue facilities appropriate for your clients, their guests and others (caterers, the band or DJ etc.)?

Keeping all the above considerations in mind, it shouldn't be too difficult to select a suitable venue.

Things to Consider

Once you've found a suitable ceremony and reception venue, you will need to make a start with the decorations and any equipment hire. There are certain things to consider, such as the following:

Ceremony Venue

For the ceremony site you have to consider certain elements when planning what equipment to hire and what decorations to organise. First of all, if the ceremony is to be held outside, make sure there is some shelter close by in case of unpredictable weather such as rain or hail. An alternative would be to set up a marquee for such cases. It is also necessary to think about what time of the day the ceremony will be held. You will need to position the wedding party and guests with their backs to the sun. The photos will also turn out much better if the wedding party are not squinting all the time.

Consider the type of equipment that will be required for the actual ceremony and take into account the following:

- Your entrance/processional.
- Perhaps hiring a red carpet or something similar to walk on.
- The actual point where the couple will exchange their vows.
- You can hire wedding arches and any other decorative items which you may need. These could add a romantic touch to the ceremony.
- If there are to be any readings, you may need to organise a stand for the readers.
- A location for the register signing.
- You may like to hire a chair and table set where the couple will sit to sign the register.
- Number of seats (if any) required for the guests, and where they are to be positioned.
- Other decorative items you may like to have.

Layout of Venue

The venue and its layout are of the utmost importance. You might ask the manager of your chosen venue to provide a copy of the floor plan. If this is not available, you might make some rough sketches. This will give you ideas on what equipment you will need, where this equipment is to be positioned, and the size of the venue and its capacity. On the floor plan make a note of where a DJ or a band and the caterers might be positioned, the bar location (if needed or desired), gift table, dance floor and guest seating list. It is also advisable to note where the power points are located. It will also be necessary to note where the toilets are located as you will certainly not want to position the caterers near them.

Outdoor Considerations

Leaving the weather aside for a moment, other significant considerations with outdoor weddings are bugs and bathrooms. Even if the wedding will take place at someone's home, it is a good idea to rent bathrooms which can be set up outside the house. This will be necessary if there will be many people moving around the place. A large number of people will put a lot of pressure on the sewer systems, and homeowners have actually had their plumbing wiped during such events. Renting bathrooms from reputable companies will give you the choice of a simple holding tank or luxurious Executive Restroom Trailers complete with carpeting, air-conditioning, lighting, music, and sinks with running water. You will need at least one rental bathroom for every one hundred guests. Make sure they are placed away from the main activities.

Another consideration when holding a wedding outdoors is bugs. In warmer climates these can actually become an extreme irritation. Imagine a Southern wedding in July in the U.S. for example: flies, wasps, mosquitoes, gnats, ticks, yellow jackets, and numerous other insects. They will be swarming all over the food and stinging guests. The smell of sugar will be irresistible to them and they will be drawn to the light in the event of an outdoor evening wedding. Citronella candles are effective but you would need a lot of them, and because of the smell they produce they would need to be kept outside the marquee, especially during meal times. Tent entryways are useful as they control the flow of people as well as other outdoor elements. You might also try spraying the area but the chemicals contained in the sprays could present safety issues, especially for children. Another option is to ask the waiting staff to move around with trays of bug repellent or wipes. Supplies should be kept in the restrooms.

The site layout map need only be a simple drawing providing a concise outline of spacing and placement. If no site map of the venue is available, you should use blank pages, one each for the ceremony and the reception site. Fill in all the essentials as covered in Table 6.1 below.

Site layouts are quite straightforward when weddings are to be held in established venues which do not offer many options for variations. As planning spaces become more open and more rentals become necessary, the site layout will become more complex. Outdoor weddings or receptions which are held in tents, for example, need more attention to detail and will increase the number of decisions that must be made.

Site Layout Essentials for Weddings

Table 6.1

Ceremony	Reception
• Parking • Room sizes/dimensions • Entrances and exits, with special marks for accessible paths, ramps and indications of controls (e.g. security check, metal detector) • Restroom facilities • Number of rows, and marks for any reserved areas, indications if areas are separated for the bride's and groom's guests • A waiting area for the bride, groom, and the wedding party before the ceremony • Indicators to show location for floral décor and any other special ceremony elements • Space for central focus usage (e.g. an altar, arch, or other visually accessible area) • Fire lanes and other emergency information	• Parking • Room measurements/dimensions • Entrances and exits, with special marks for accessible paths and ramps and indications of controls (e.g., metal detector, security check) • Restroom facilities • Cocktail hour area, if separate from reception space • Number of guest tables with marks for reserved tables • Head table and/or sweetheart table • Service stations for wait staff • Tables and areas associated with seating, stationery, gifts, the cake, and favours • Kitchen and/or food-related areas • Bar area • Music and dance area • Areas for the placement of specialised lighting • Indicators for the location for specialised floral décor and other special reception elements • Fire lanes and other emergency information

The floor plan must be considered before choosing table shapes as they come in many different shapes and sizes. Knowing the floor plan and room dimensions will allow you to work out how many tables will comfortably fit into the room and how they will be spaced. There should be at least 48 inches between each table but preferably 54 inches. This will allow enough space for movement so that guests do not feel crowded or cramped. It will also allow the waiting staff to move around and do their jobs unencumbered. Knowing the venue spacing for each wedding that you plan will maximise safety and comfort levels for the staff as well as the guests.

Wedding Ceremony Equipment

As already mentioned, so many options exist and the planning for the hiring of decorations and equipment may appear an overwhelming task. The list below may provide you with some assistance.

Making a ceremony unique and of course, memorable will depend upon many things. Here is a list of items you might like to purchase or hire:

- Aisle runner/carpet
- Baskets (for ceremony booklets etc.)
- Balloons
- Backdrops
- Birds (for release)
- Butterflies (to be released)
- Chair covers
- Chair/Pew bows
- Candles
- Candelabras
- Candle holders
- Columns/pillars
- Confetti/flower petals/bubbles
- Flower pots/vases
- Floral arrangements
- Flooring
- General decorations and/or banners
- Heating or cooling
- Lectern/stand for readings or seating plans etc.)
- Lighting
- Linen/fabric
- Marquee/shelter
- Plants/pots/trees
- Piñatas
- Gazebo/rotunda
- Special effects/fireworks etc.
- Steamers/ribbons
- Table decorations
- Tables/chairs
- Trellis
- Umbrellas
- Wedding arch

Reception Venue Equipment

Once you have made a note of where everything is located on the floor, you can then start planning what you might want to hire for the reception. If it is to be a sit-down dinner, think about how many guests will be seated at each table. This will make it easier to work out how many tables and chairs are needed. Note that in venues with limited space, round tables will take up more space than rectangular ones.

It may also be advisable to discuss any requirements the DJ or band may have regarding equipment. Usually, they will come prepared; however, it is always wise to double-check.

It is necessary to carefully consider all other services you may be employing for the reception and contact them to check whether you need to do anything with regard to equipment.

Here is a list showing items that may be needed for receptions:

- Backdrops
- Bar
- Balloons
- Cake table
- Cake stand
- Candles
- Candle holders
- Candelabras
- Chair covers
- Catering equipment
- Columns/pillars
- Cutlery
- Crockery
- Dance floor
- Easel/stand for seating plans
- Floral arrangements
- Flower pots/vases
- Flooring
- General decorations or banners
- Glassware
- Heating/cooling
- Jukebox
- Lectern/stand (for an MC and the speeches)
- Lighting
- Linen/fabric
- Marquee/shelter
- Microphone / P.A. system
- Napkins
- Napkin rings
- Place card holders
- Plants/pots/trees
- Piñatas
- Refrigeration and iceboxes
- Special effects/fireworks etc.
- Streamers/ribbons
- Tablecloths (for the bridal table, the cake table, guests' tables, and the gift table)

- Tables and chairs
- Table decorations
- Table centrepieces
- Table runners
- Wishing well

Equipment Hire/Rentals

Rentals are used for weddings in ways that are cost-effective. If a couple had to purchase everything for their wedding, they would probably vastly exceed their budget. Tents, tables and chairs, tableware, linens, lighting, and other specialty pieces have a dual purpose: firstly, every rental has its own specific purpose and, secondly, rentals bring out the theme and mood of a wedding. The theme might be traditional sophistication or employ a funky, modern element. This section explains the essentials that wedding consultants will need to know regarding wedding rentals and layouts, including:

- tables, chairs, linens, and tableware
- tents
- lighting
- other outdoor considerations
- coordinating everything with the site layout.

Tents

For ceremonies and receptions being held outdoors, tents are often rented, usually because the weather is rarely perfect. Rain isn't the only thing to worry about. Wind, cold, excessive heat, humidity and bugs can make an outdoor wedding uncomfortable for everybody. In this section we will cover the three aspects of tent rental:

1. styles and accessories;
2. size and setup; and
3. the cost.

Tent Styles and Accessories

The two main tent styles are frame tents and pole tents. There are also many others which fall under these two broad categories. Sugarplum Tent Company's David Richardson provides information below which will assist you in distinguishing the different tent styles. He explains that frame tents do not need interior poles as they have aluminium piping located at the top and sides of the tent. Frame tents are needed when the site is on concrete or asphalt (or anywhere poles cannot be anchored). Frame tents are more self-supporting but it is still necessary to stake them down. Installing a frame tent will take more time and therefore these rentals are more expensive. The aluminium used to support the tent is usually unattractive; hence, fabric liners are needed to make it look aesthetically pleasing.

Pole tents are upheld by interior and exterior poles which are anchored to the ground. Modern pole tents are also called tension tents because high-tension ratchets or winches are used to produce a taut appearance. Pole tents are a classic choice for a wedding as they allow dramatic, high peaks and a sweeping billowy appearance. However, as these interior poles can also be unattractive they are usually wrapped in fabric or decorated with flowers and greenery.

Picking the tent style is one of many decisions which have to be made with tent rentals. Others involve the flooring, entrance canopies, sidewalls, lighting, electricity, liners, heating and/or air-conditioning and staging areas. The flooring must be taken into account, especially if the ground is uneven, gravelly or wet. Level flooring will prevent the bride, groom and guests from stumbling, thus avoiding, at the very least, an embarrassing moment or, at worst, an injury. The flooring can be made of wood, carpet, plastic or all-weather artificial turf. If there is to be a dance floor, you will have to select that as well.

Canopies, sidewalls and the ceiling might be transparent, which would allow a more open look. This could be complemented with decorations and lighting. Electricity would therefore be required, along with a generator to heat or cool the tent area. Steps and staging areas are commonly used for the placing of the head table and/or the band. When you consider all of these things together, you can see that tents are chosen not really to save money on a reception site but to offer couples the opportunity to tailor their event space.

Guidelines for Selecting the Correct Tent

	Tent Size If	Tent Size If
Number of Guests	Seated at Tables	Standing or Buffet
50	20x40	20 x30
100	30 x50	30 x30
150	40 x60	40 x40
200	40 x80	40 x60
250	60 x70	40 x80
300	60 x80	60 x 60

Tent Size and Set-up

The Table above displays the basic guidelines for choosing the tent size. Dimensions can vary of course but, generally, tent sizes begin at 10 x 10 feet. The length and width will increase in 10-foot increments. The guidelines above DO NOT include a dance floor, which is usually another 600 square feet. Therefore, if you are planning a wedding with 100 people, seated, it would be necessary to choose a 30 x 50 sized tent. This will give you 1,500 square feet of room. If the clients want a dance floor as well, then a minimum of 2,100 square feet would be necessary. You would have to consult with the tent vendor to find the closest available size. Going by the above chart, it might be advisable to choose a 40 x 60 foot size as this will give you 2,400 square feet. Keep in mind that it's always better to have more room than not enough. If the area is cramped, guests, waiting staff and the couple will be uncomfortable, and you will want to avoid this on such a special day.

Discuss the pricing with the tent vendor and make sure that it includes not only the rental of the tent but also the time needed to set it up and the number of workers who will be employed to do this. Another point is to advise the clients that it is in their interest to hire a technician to be present for the entire event in case there are any problems with the tent. This person will be indispensable should any issues arise. For example, if heat has to be adjusted or sidewalls need to be raised, the technician will be the one person capable of handling this easily and professionally without having to involve any members of the wedding. A good, reputable tent company might be a little more expensive but it will be well worth dealing with them to avoid having an unsafe tent on a wedding day.

Tables, Chairs, Linen and Tableware

The renting of a tent involves the renting of many other items. Tables, chairs, tableware and linen will be required. These items will sometimes need to be rented at indoor venues too, and upgrades will also have to be paid for. At some venues you may only use the equipment provided there while others will be more flexible and will allow you to bring in your own rentals. You must check what the venue is offering in advance in order to advise the couple and allow them to make their choices. You may also need to offer some alternatives.

Tables are the easiest items to choose because they come in many different sizes. The most common guest tables are measured in 5-foot rounds and seat between 8 and 10 people. Another common table size is the 6-foot round which will seat between 10 and 12 people, while 8-foot oblong tables will accommodate 8 to 10 people. Sweetheart tables are becoming increasingly popular with brides and grooms who prefer to be seated by themselves. If a couple decide that they want to sit with their wedding party, a round-head, rather than oblong, table is a better choice.

Tables will also be needed for the gifts, the cake, escort cards, favours, and waiting stations which will be used by catering staff. These tables will vary in size. A table for gifts, favours and escort cards should be a 6-foot or 8-foot oblong. The cake table might be a round 4-foot.

There are fewer options available for chairs, with a budget-conscious option being folding chairs. They come in different colours and can be made of wood, plastic or metal. Depending on the material they are made from, the process will also vary. Padding on folding chairs will incur an extra cost. For upscale weddings, a popular choice is Chiavari chairs. These are more formal chairs and are very elegant; they also come with cushions that can be covered in many different fabrics to match the table linens. As a price comparison, a wooden, padded folding chair will cost around £3 while a cushioned Chiavari chair will cost around £9 per chair.

You must familiarise yourself with all the regulations when bringing your own tables and chairs into a venue. In historic buildings, for example, tables cannot be rolled on the floor, and every leg of every chair and table must have proper padding. All items have to be very carefully prepared and, therefore, staffing costs will need to be added.

Considering the very wide range of options regarding style, colour and material available for tableware and linen, clients should be advised to form a clear idea of what they want in terms of theme, colours and/or floral décor when choosing the glassware, flatware, china and linens. It is usually the linens that are overlooked and most people do not look further than the usual white colour. However, the linen is one of the least expensive ways of making a huge impression. Many reception places will allow you to bring in your own rented linens. Rental companies will give you literally hundreds of options regarding style and cut as well as fabrics which range from damask to taffeta, to velvet and lace.

Linen is available in hundreds of styles and colours. It can be floral, iridescent, embroidered, striped and pin-tucked. The current trend is to layer linens to produce dramatic and memorable effects. Linens that are patterned and bold should be matched with simple, floral décor. This will create some balance. Linen will be needed for the escort table and the cake table. These may also need table skirts. Another trend is the use of longer linens which don't require skirts. Linen must be long enough to cover table legs as they can often look rough from overuse.

When the clients have narrowed down their options for the choice of linens, you may want to work with the company specialist, who will probably send samples. You should then schedule a time with the venue to set up three tables with three different types of linen in order to determine which one looks best. At this time, it would be advisable to work together with the floral designer in order to have a centrepiece on hand. If the budget allows, you might order one or two extra tablecloths and napkins because spills do occur and a spare may be needed. Always check the linen delivery order when it arrives to ensure the correct pattern and quantity has arrived, as clients will incur extra costs should any pieces go missing. Check all rental items when they arrive for the same reason.

The catering or rental staff will usually set the tables because they will know how to do it properly. Plates, cutlery, glasses and intricate folds must be placed in a specific way, especially for formal occasions such as weddings.

After the reception, you will have to count all the rentals again. You will need to return the exact numbers to the rental company. If someone has thrown a napkin away, for example, your clients will be charged. Linen will be more expensive than napkins as it is more difficult to replace. Specialty table linen is a lot more expensive and can average £30 or more. Replacement fees will be double that amount at least.

Lighting

Lighting is important for setting the mood. Innovative lighting can transform a venue and bring it to life. If just a new coat of paint and some new carpeting can transform a house, imagine how professional lighting will be able to transform a bland venue into something glamorous.

Three areas of concern exist with lighting:

1. Centrepiece lighting;
2. Dance floor and wall lighting; and
3. Tent lighting.

Centrepiece Lighting

In ballrooms, where existing lights are already in place, the initial lighting consideration will relate to the centrepieces. This could include a wash of light or pin spotting. Pin spotting is a beam of light that is tightly focused and directed onto the table centrepieces. This allows centrepieces to “pop,” as the light doesn’t spill over onto the rest of the table. Pin spots might even be placed under a table to shoot up through a clear glass centrepiece and create a unique effect. This design emerged as a response to the trend towards bigger and taller centrepieces. For larger arrangements, pin spotting allows one hot spot on the arrangement but it cannot capture the entire piece. A wash of light makes a wider beam which will light up the entire table. This light is especially effective with spectacular linens, because the wash picks up any play or shimmer in the tablecloth. LED (light-emitting diode) lights are now quite trendy. They provide an even wash of light and use very little electricity. Regardless of the lighting style, white light should always be avoided because it doesn’t look becoming on people. Lighting is intended to make the flowers, the room, and the guests look impressive. To achieve this effect, lighting specialists select from pink and amber colouring, which are flattering and subtle.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Site Layout and Rentals

- Before meeting with a tent rental company, it will be necessary to familiarise yourself with all the different types of tents and accessories and prepare a draft of the desired site layout.
- It’s better to have too much room rather than not enough in a tent.
- The cost of a tent and all necessary associated rentals is usually much higher than renting a ballroom or other type of venue.
- Impress the guests with creative linen selections.
- When placing the linen order, add a few extra napkins and extra table cloths in case of spills.
- Count all rentals on delivery and before final pickup to ensure there are no missing items.
- Use lighting to transform a space from bland to glamorous.
- Remember that bugs and bathrooms are two important considerations with an outdoor wedding.
- Understand that site layout offers a concise overview of placement and spacing.

Wedding Attire

Bridal Gown Tradition

The white wedding dress was made popular in the 1400s by Anne of Brittany. White was worn to symbolise purity and, hence, the bride’s virginity. Before this time, blue was worn as a symbol of purity by the bride, and the groom would wear a band around the bottom of his wedding clothes.

Queen Victoria again made the white wedding dress popular during her reign in the 1800s. At that time, it was worn as a statement of social standing since, in those days, any woman able to afford a costly white gown was highly regarded in social circles. White fabric was expensive and, as dry cleaners were not available, it was almost impossible to keep it clean. This made it a rare item, made only for one-off occasions.

White fabric became more popular as time went on and modern technology advanced. White wedding gowns re-emerged as symbols of purity (in particular of the bride) and remain popular today. Coloured wedding gowns, including bold colours and pastel shades, are also working their way into wedding ceremonies and becoming more fashionable and stylish.

Wedding Attire and the Bridal Party

A future bride will start organising the wedding dress soon after becoming engaged. This is a very important decision. The gown's design can set the tone for the whole wedding. The bride must decide whether her gown will be very formal with a long train, or more casual with a simple coloured sash. She must decide whether it will be silk, taffeta, lace, organza or satin. What about the colour? Will that be classic white or ivory, or perhaps have a modern flash of lime, blue or pink? These are just some of the things the bride will have to consider when choosing a gown.

Brides usually purchase their wedding gowns without advice from a wedding consultant. They will visit bridal salons with their mothers or close friends to see what's on offer. Despite this, as a consultant you must be familiar with wedding attire trends and styles. You will have to help brides match their gowns to other elements in their weddings and give advice on selecting the tuxedos and flower girls' dresses; you may even have to guide their mothers in selecting gowns. Below, we will look at wedding attire for brides, grooms and the wedding party, and also learn what to do in the event of any wardrobe malfunctions.

Choosing the Wedding Gown

Possibly the most important feature of a wedding, the wedding gown needs to be given a great amount of consideration with regard to the design, colour and style. Brides often find choosing a bridal gown a daunting task, and understandably so.

Many factors must be considered when selecting a wedding gown to make sure it is an appropriate choice for both the bride wearing it and for the style of the wedding. There are endless considerations when choosing a gown but the most important ones are as follows:

- budget
- body shape
- personal style
- style or theme of the wedding
- the wedding colours

- the season in which the wedding will take place
- whether the ceremony will take place indoors or outdoors
- family expectations or traditions
- religion

Different wedding styles will come and go, which is why a planner must keep abreast of all the trends. Trade magazines and bridal fashion shows are two ways of doing this. The last thing you want to do is recommend a gown to a bride only to have her friends tell her it looks like something her mother wore thirty years ago. Fashion-conscious brides will be looking at New York and Paris catwalks to gain inspiration. One can also discover what is fashionable by watching shows such as the Academy Awards where clothes are often copied and will become bridal wear for the general public. Today, gowns with lots of 'bling' (crystals, beading, pearls etc.) are making statements on catwalks. Some popular themes for gowns include skirts with tiered tulle layers, fabric trim specially designed by fashion icons, and voluminous bubble hems.

The brides of today have numerous options in terms of their wedding gowns. Fabric choices today are much broader than even twenty years ago. Polyester, rayon, nylon and silk can all be woven to create stunning fabrics such as charmeuse, crepe back satin, brocade, duchesse satin, lace, shantung, velvet, taffeta, georgette and dupioni. These synthetic materials can be very versatile as well as affordable as opposed to materials such as pure silk. This gives designers even more choice of fabrics than ever before, which in turn means more choices for brides.

Some brides still prefer to wear gowns made of materials from the past despite the numerous contemporary styles available today. Some of the most famous wedding gowns would be those worn by Grace Kelly, Princess Diana, Jacqueline Kennedy and Carolyn Bessette Kennedy. Indeed, Grace Kelly's gown, which has been carefully preserved, is one of the most popular and beloved objects in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. For the 50th anniversary of Grace Kelly's wedding to Prince Rainer III of Monaco, the museum decided to stage an exhibition of her gown with other elements of her wedding day such as the headdress, veil and shoes that she wore. It also included the pearl-and-lace-encrusted prayer book she carried down the aisle. This exhibition was extremely popular and was enjoyed by thousands of people.

As mentioned, brides will not usually consult the wedding planner regarding the wedding gown. They may ask for some advice, however, regarding the top designers and where to shop for gowns and accessories. Many well-known designers are also known for bridal clothing. ReemAcra, Carolina Herrera, Vera Wang and many more are designing wedding attire.

In every city there will be many options for locating the perfect wedding dress. There will be couture shops, stand-alone bridal stores, shops with exclusive designer labels, outlet malls, department stores and bridal chains. E-Bay is another place some brides turn to in order to locate a gown. There, brides will find more than 9,000 wedding gowns for sale, both new and used. A savvy bride will be able to find the

dress of her dreams at the right price. This auction site provides brides with another resource for locating bridal accessories. Usually, the prices will be a fraction of the cost of retail stores.

The bride's age will also be a factor when deciding on the gown's style. Something that works for someone in her 20s may not be comfortable for someone in her 40s. You may have heard of 'Camilla style' which came about after Camilla Parker Bowles married Prince Charles. Her choice of wedding attire impressed people with its flattering and tasteful guidance. The wedding gown is likely to be the most expensive clothing purchase for couples, with an average price of £1,000 and more. If clients ask for your guidance on their dress purchase, you may offer these tips:

1. Do not delay. Wedding dresses chosen less than six months before the wedding date will probably incur a rush charge. This can sometimes be as much as 25% of the gown cost.
2. Alteration fees can add up. Many brides will pay around £150 to £300 for alteration fees. Many brides do not account for this cost in the initial attire budget.
3. Size will matter. For brides who are smaller (0 to 2) or those who are plus sized (16 or larger), there could be an extra charge of 10 – 20% for the dress. This depends on the designer of course. Be prepared to mention this if you know that your brides fall into one of these sizing groups. Jennifer Johnston states that time is of the essence. Brides often have no sense of urgency because they often do not realise how much is involved when starting the planning process. There is, however, a rhyme and reason to creating the perfect look and every step must be well thought out.

Once the bride has chosen her own gown, she can begin thinking about her bridesmaids. First, however, she must decide on her hairstyle, her hair accessories and the style of veil. The veil must be given very careful consideration. Most of the favoured styles are the chapel length which comes with blusher to cover the face. They often have lace. A laced veil can either match the wedding dress or complement a dress which is simple and unadorned. Consideration should also be given to the choice of bracelet, earrings or necklace. Winter wedding brides (and autumn) would do well to consider a wrap and gloves which can be made either of fur or of the same fabric as the dress.

The bride has to select her undergarments and her shoes before any fittings can start. Above all, the shoes must be comfortable. When put all together, the bridal accessories will complete the look the bride is seeking to achieve. Depending on culture, bridal attire and bridal accessories will differ. The white wedding dress has become popular worldwide but many cultures still have their own distinctive bridal wear.

In most cases, brides have no specific cultural traditions which will influence their wedding clothing but many will want to keep four specific elements for sentimental value. These four things would be something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue. Clients will probably ask for your suggestions for these four categories. Suggestions you might make to your clients are shown in the table below.

TABLE 6 .2 Sentimental “Something” Selections

Something old	Something new	Something borrowed	Something blue:
Items in this category will often come from the bride’s mother, grandmother, or the mother of the groom. For example, a bride might wear a piece of jewellery which has been passed down through her family or the groom’s family. Alternatively, she might wear a vintage dress that belonged to her mother or grandmother, or she might have lace from a vintage dress incorporated into her own dress, veil, or handkerchief.	This is an easy decision because brides make many attire purchases. However, many wish to choose one of these that “count” as filling the category. If the dress is new, this is typically the chosen representation. Otherwise, her lingerie, veil, purse, shoes, or a decorative hairpin can be the something new.	Often, brides turn to close friends such as the maid of honour or a close family member to borrow something for her wedding day. She might borrow the dress worn by a friend or use the purse that a relative carried on her wedding day. Many brides do not have expensive jewellery, and often a close aunt or old family friend will insist that the bride wear her Tiffany necklace or bracelet.	For brides who plan to wear a garter, they will often have a piece of blue silk sewn in the garter. This is a very simple way to incorporate the colour blue. If not wearing a garter, a linen handkerchief with blue embroidery is often chosen. Handkerchiefs might seem old fashioned but are actually quite practical. Many brides cry during their weddings, and it is nice to have something more attractive than a paper tissue to use. An embroidered handkerchief is also a lovely keepsake. If the colour scheme is also blue, a blue ribbon can be used for a hand-tied bouquet. Alternatively, the bride can wear a sapphire or blue topaz hairpin or bracelet.

Theme and Style

The bride’s gown must be in keeping with the style and theme of her wedding. The wedding can be made a visual delight by maintaining simple themes which will flow through every aspect of the ceremony as well as the reception. The choosing of the wedding dress requires very careful consideration and preferably expert advice. An inappropriate style of gown is likely to change the overall style and theme of a wedding, and may create a different look altogether from that which was originally desired. Generally speaking, if the couple opt for a traditional wedding the gown should be in keeping with that. Styles such as the Cinderella gown or ball-gown, which are quite heavily decorated and fuller gowns, would suit this traditional type of wedding. More contemporary wedding gowns would be sleek and simple. Carefully consider the wedding theme and any advice given by the couturier/dressmaker as well as the ideas mentioned below.

Traditional

Traditional, formal dresses are usually full and often have embellishments such as detailing or pearls. Patterned fabrics are popular in traditional wedding gowns. The ball and Cinderella gowns are two examples of traditionally styled wedding dresses.

An A-Line gown might also be worn for traditional weddings. If you do not like the heavily beaded look, an A-Line gown is a good choice. It may be dressed down a little (in comparison to the ball or Cinderella gown).

At formal weddings it is acceptable to have a cathedral-length veil, gloves and a tiara. However, do not overdo it as this will take attention away from the bride herself.

Sophisticated and Elegant

For a more sophisticated wedding, a simple gown adorned with elegant accessories would be an excellent choice. The princess gown, mermaid gown, sheath-styled gown, or any gown cut on the bias all come under the category of sophisticated gowns. They often look absolutely stunning when adorned by accessories containing crystals or other precious gemstones.

Romantic

Cinderella comes to mind when thinking romantic. The Cinderella wedding gown is probably the most romantically styled of all the gowns. It has the classic fairy tale look and is most often a winner.

Modern

For more contemporary gowns simplicity is the key. The styles are simple but elegant and would include the princess lines, sheath gowns, mermaid gowns and any gown cut on the bias. So many flattering and simply beautiful choices are available in the modern gown category. Brides might be more daring and go for something unique, accessorising it with simple yet stunning adornments.

Menswear

What about the groom? Must all the tuxedos match or can the groomsmen wear their own tuxes? Are khakis a suitable match for navy blazers? Should the men wear their own blazers? What about the ties – should they match the bridesmaid's dresses? Should the tuxes be rented at the wedding destination or in the groomsmen's respective hometowns? Is it acceptable for the men to wear white shirts even if the bride's gown is off-white? The above are only a few questions that arise when the bride and groom begin considering menswear. The bride usually has a very clear idea of what she would like to wear; however, with regard to the men, a wedding consultant will often be asked for advice. For this reason, you must educate yourself on formal men's attire. It is advisable to make an appointment to see the manager of

your local tuxedo store. Ask questions about the process, all the way from measuring, to ordering the outfits, to the pick-up. You must also familiarise yourself with the store's policies.

At bridal shows, make sure you pay attention not only to bridal wear but also to the men's fashion so that you can give updated advice on many different things. Is a waistcoat currently in or out? Is a cummerbund passé? The Academy Awards show, as with women's fashion, may be helpful. Be assured that if stars are wearing something today, many clients will request it in the coming days.

The most basic rule to remember is that bridesmaids and groomsmen must look as if they belong together. If the bridesmaids are wearing summery Lilly Pulitzer gowns, the groomsmen must also be in casual summer attire such as navy blazers or khakis. If groomsmen are wearing black tuxedos then the bridesmaids must be in formal gowns. Ties worn by the groomsmen must match the bridesmaids' attire. They do not have to match exactly but they do need to work well together.

The Wedding Party

The current trend for bridesmaids' dresses is either knee-length or below-the-knee-style gowns. Jennifer Johnston states that these shorter styles could be worn at late afternoon and evening weddings when made from fabrics such as crepe black satin or chiffon. The bridesmaids' gowns must match, but they do not need to be identical. Another trend is for the dresses to be made from the same fabrics but in different styles which will suit different body types.

Brides usually choose their bridesmaids' dresses. Sometimes they will have help and sometimes they will do it all themselves. Wedding planners are not often asked for advice on this decision, although you may be asked where brides might buy accessories for their bridesmaids, such as wraps, jewellery, shoes, hair accessories, gloves, etc. Make sure you are prepared and have a list of stores that you are very familiar with and that you trust. Tuxedos are often rented or purchased from the same place where the groom obtained his. It is also necessary to check whether your local store rents tuxedos for toddlers and/or infants as well. The ring bearer in particular will need to wear a tuxedo. The bride may also choose to have a replica of her own gown made for the flower girl. Having good relations with a designer who specialises in this will be useful.

Another trend is to incorporate pets into weddings. They are often considered members of the family and as such will need special attire for the wedding day. Find out where you might order good tuxes and other types of formalwear for animals, as you are likely to be asked for recommendations. Check the local pet shops first and then go online where you will find some excellent resources such as trixieandpeanut.com, which caters for both cats and dogs.

No details are too small when considering the attire for a wedding. The best wedding consultants will be able to help people find suitable wedding attire for every member of the wedding party.

Wardrobe Malfunctions

As well as knowing where to rent or buy wedding attire for the whole party, you must also know what to do in the event of a wardrobe malfunction on the big day itself. You can almost count on something becoming unfastened or falling apart, heels snapping, or straps breaking at some point. It is up to you to save the day by using tools in your well-stocked emergency kit. It must contain needle and threads, safety pins of all sizes, and baby wipes.

As well as fixing clothing issues, wedding planners should also know how to:

- (1) bustle a bride's train;
- (2) knot a tie or bow tie.

Bustling a bride's train is an important precaution to stop the gown from becoming soiled and to keep the bride from tripping. Reviewing the bustling procedure with the bridal store before the wedding day is advisable as each gown is bustled differently.

Many bustles will come undone during the reception if they are not designed correctly. Be prepared with your emergency kit to remedy the situation. Know how to knot a tie as well, as this will come in handy. Grooms have been known to be too nervous to tie their own ties on their wedding day. Moreover, many men will never have worn bow ties before and will therefore need a little help. Make sure you learn how to knot the tie fashionably and quickly. Similarly, knowing how to tie bridesmaids' sashes into perfect bows before they head down the aisle is a useful skill to possess.

The Groom's Attire in Scotland

In some places, the groom's clothing is especially noteworthy. In Scotland, for example, men will wear tartan kilts, sporrans and dirks. Tartan kilts are easily recognisable Celtic garments. They come in many colours and plaid patterns and are representative of a wearer's clan. Grooms in Highland attire wear fur pouches too. They are known as sporrans. They also wear a small dirk, which is a traditional Scottish knife. Brides might wear a clan tartan shawl with their contemporary dresses. Traditional Scottish attire and the romantic mood that often accompanies Scottish cultural traditions are really very appealing. In fact, many couples who aren't even of Scottish descent opt for Celtic-themed weddings as a way of stepping into the past momentarily.

Consultant/Planner Checklist and Reminders for Wedding Attire

- Set the wedding tone with the wedding gown.
- Make sure you familiarise yourself with wedding gown shops in your local area.
- Ensure you keep up to date on current fashion trends.
- Learn about menswear styles.
- Ensure that groomsmen and bridesmaids look like they belong together.

- Ensure your clients know about any rush charges, all alteration fees, and any additional charges for gowns that are larger or smaller than average.
- Give brides many options regarding places where they can purchase accessories.
- Do not be surprised if couples ask you to order a tuxedo for a cat or dog.
- Always be prepared for any type of wardrobe malfunction.
- Learn how to bustle a bridal train and how to knot a bow tie properly.

Food and Beverages

The food and beverages will usually be the most expensive elements of a wedding. They will almost certainly take a significant portion of the budgetary allowance for reception and rentals. Many people are not used to making menu decisions in such detail as is required for a wedding with large numbers of people. You, as the wedding consultant/planner, will no doubt be consulted. Wedding consultants and caterers work together. Some vendors don't like using liaisons while others like to work with knowledgeable consultants. Caterers tend to fall into the latter category because they often become planners by default if professional wedding consultants haven't been hired. Consultants often have on-going relationships with caterers, thus saving the caterer and the couple a lot of valuable time. In this section we look at essential considerations regarding food, beverages and wedding cakes.

Finding a caterer and working with him/her/them is a sales process from beginning to end. A consultant will usually start by suggesting a few different caterers for the couple to consider. You must suggest caterers who vary in their styles, services and, of course, prices. Narrow the group down to three or even four and hold initial meetings with them all. During this time the caterers should give information about their service and package options. Some caterers focus on food and non-alcoholic beverages. Most of them should also be able to provide alcoholic drinks as well as other services such as wedding cakes, rentals and staffing. It is at this meeting that all the logistics will be discussed: the number of people attending, the time of day, the site, and any information regarding any other vendors who will influence the catering services, such as the tent rental company.

Any dietary restrictions or special needs should be mentioned at this meeting. You must make sure that the caterers can accommodate specific requirements. For example, some caterers work with set menus. They will not be able to create menus that strictly follow kosher Jewish dietary needs (Glatt kosher). A couple requiring Glatt kosher meals should work with caterers who are kosher certified.

The three requirements in that case would be as follows:

- (1) shellfish, rabbit and pork are forbidden;
- (2) meat and dairy cannot be eaten together;
- (3) any grape products (such as wine) must be produced by people of the Jewish faith.

Caters should certainly be able to address some unique dietary requirements such as vegetarian meals, but these usually incur additional fees. Wedding consultants must be aware of any menu restrictions beforehand in order to limit the initial list of caterers to those who can satisfy the couple's needs.

Sometimes, only one or two people will have special dietary requests. At other times, the couple will simply choose their specialised menu for everyone. For example, if the bride or groom is allergic to nuts the couple will probably request that no nuts or nut extracts be included in any part of the menu. If one or the other is diabetic, a separate sugar-free cake might be provided, or the entire cake might be sugar-free.

It is imperative that both you, as the consultant, and the couple communicate very clearly and early any special needs to your caterer. This must be done before the formal proposal is offered. You must also determine whether it is possible to have substitutions for any individuals with special dietary needs.

At the first meeting, the caterer will get to know the couple as well as their specific food and beverage requirements. This information will then be used to create a targeted proposal. Rachel Gittins, an event designer at Ridgewells, explains that the catering proposal should be presented after the initial meeting and will include the cost of food, staffing, equipment, gratuities, taxes and delivery. Always check whether there are any set-up costs or overtime charges. The proposal must meet the couple's desires as stated in the first meeting. It must be accurate, well-organised and thorough, with no spelling or grammatical errors. It should contain the bride and groom's names, the venue for the wedding, and any other specific details mentioned at the meeting. Make sure that all notes on special needs are included. Gittins states that it is during this proposal stage that the caterer must try to 'wow' the clients. This might be done by the use of special touches which send a message to the couple that the catering company views their event as unique and will treat it accordingly. For example, if the couple happened to mention that the groom proposed while holidaying in Australia and they would like an outback theme, the caterer might suggest a signature drink to accompany the wedding cake aptly named 'the koala café.' If the clients are avid gardeners the caterer's proposal might be presented on paper elegantly adorned in a floral design. Small things such as these will show the couple that the caterer was listening carefully to them at their meeting and clearly understood the focus of their wedding. More upscale caterers really like working with 'foodie brides.' These are women who understand and truly appreciate fine cuisine. It doesn't matter if the proposal is sent first to the wedding consultant and not to the couple directly. These small and intimate touches will make a difference. The consultant and caterer will co-ordinate and compile a proposal that will incorporate the catering elements.

It is vital that the clients taste the food from the caterers they are considering. Top caterers will host formal tastings a few times a year. Couples and consultants who have expressed an interest in a particular caterer's services will be invited to this event which will showcase their food, presentation and service. This is a smart marketing technique as it exposes people to certain hors d'oeuvres, pastries, entrees and other food they might not otherwise have considered. It also gives the caterers a chance to highlight any new linens or tableware in a pleasant, festive atmosphere.

Trends in Food and Beverages

Some cutting-edge caterers are indeed trendsetters and these trends will be witnessed at weddings or other events they service. Signature drinks are especially popular nowadays. This is an entertaining and flexible trend because beverages are highly versatile; even a simple drink can have flair when it's given a clever name, presented in an amusing glass, given a unique straw, or even decorated with a non-traditional garnish. Drinkable desserts, chocolate fountains, monogrammed tuxedo and dress strawberries, edible pictures etc. are stylish ways of offering sweets as favours or before cutting the cake. Edible place cards can be made from white and dark chocolate and another unexpected treats, and they are lots of fun.

Trends can also be highlighted by the presentation and style of the entrees. Specialty entrees could be designed and also named to go with the wedding theme. Providing split entrees is another current trend which blends the diversity of a buffet with the elegance of the plated service.

Trends can also be seen in the caterer's equipment. Cutting-edge tableware will leave a lasting impression. An example would be cocktail stations instead of a traditional reception. They will present the opportunity to showcase new and funky plates, cutlery and bowls. For example, guests wouldn't usually expect soup at cocktail stations, but using stylish shot or cordial glasses will create the opportunity for this.

Generally speaking, if a caterer is more upscale the managers will probably be able to make things happen. Some caterers have set menus and do not offer much flexibility, but high-end businesses usually provide a la carte menus. In some rare cases, if a bride and groom want specialty equipment but the catering company doesn't own it, the manager might decide to buy it if it is deemed sufficiently cutting-edge. It can then be rented to the couple getting married and kept for further use. The more high-end caterers are usually more open to working with support caterers. If a couple want a specific ethnic food that the catering company doesn't provide, they will work with a support caterer to make sure they obtain and showcase the specific food item. It is against the law for a catering company to pick up food from a restaurant and take it to the wedding reception. It is not against the law to order food from a restaurant and have it delivered to the venue. The primary caterers will then present the food in a manner consistent with their own presentation. This gives couples a sense of satisfaction knowing that their caterer will go to great effort to make sure their food and beverages are perfect.

Types of Services

The food choices, the reception venue, and the formality level will dictate the type of service to be used during the main meal. There are three main types of service presentations: plated, buffet, and French. The skills of the waiting staff can vary greatly depending on the type of service. The buffet service is the least formal and is often chosen by couples who want to offer a large variety of food for their guests to choose from.

Servers are highly skilled in keeping the buffet very clean and ensuring that all empty dishes are quickly changed. Caterers know that it's not good form for a guest to see a chafing dish and not want to choose the last of any item. Moreover, people standing a few places back should not fear that a specific dish will run out before they get there. A buffet must always look full and delicious, as it does in its original state. Be aware that a buffet-type service is not necessarily convenient at every venue. In historic houses, which usually have many small rooms with many tables, guests would find it very difficult to navigate back and forth, and confusion would ensue. This type of venue needs a plated type of service. Most of the work would then be done in the kitchen, behind the scenes. This type of service also allows the elegant arrangement of foods. Each plate will be carefully and quickly prepared before being covered. This cover will be removed and any sauces added when it's time to serve the meal.

During plated services, a few waiters might work each table in order to ensure that all plates come out as quickly as possible. This happens a lot at formal weddings. However, this may not be practical for some venues such as those with a kitchen on a different floor to the dining hall. Here, French service would be more appropriate. If a venue is not really suitable for plated services but a formal affair is nevertheless required, French service would be highly appropriate. The entire meal for everyone at the one table is brought out and is served from one large platter or dish. All the servers wear white gloves and must be very dexterous with a spoon and fork because they must manoeuvre the utensils, the platter and the food very skilfully to ensure the meal is presented in an appealing manner. French service ensures that every individual guest receives special attention. If this service is being considered, make sure you ask the caterer about the ratio of staffing. At top venues, expect one waiter for every eight or ten guests (1:8 – 1:10) at most. In a venue which is less customer-focused, the ratio would be one waiter for every twelve people or more.

For the buffet-style service, fewer servers will be needed. If a cocktail hour is desired, servers will usually be present to pass around hors d'oeuvres. Here, one waiter per thirty or even thirty-five guests is acceptable (1:30-1:35). In certain cultures, such as Portuguese, food services are all-day affairs.

Food and Beverage Costs

Quantity, quality and variety will make a difference to the associated costs of food and beverages, as well as the geographic location of the wedding. The general cost of living in any specific vicinity will definitely affect the pricing as well. Certain customs within a locale will also make a difference to the food and beverage costs. Generally, though, the cost can range from £15 to £500 and higher. For this reason you must familiarise yourself with your community's ranges.

For those on a very strict budget, there are certain ways of cutting down on the reception cost. Some caterers allow couples to buy their own alcohol, and they only charge for the actual pouring. This must be discussed with the caterer before suggesting it to your clients. Another way to cut costs is to limit the alcohol to wine and beer. Good wine, however, can cost more than liquor and will also have fewer servings per bottle. Sometimes the couple will opt for an alcohol-free event and only have a champagne toast. This is quite acceptable, especially for afternoon receptions, for example. Another way of saving

on costs is to have a cash bar where the guests pay for their alcoholic drinks. Be careful with this, however, as some guests may be offended. Only do this if it is common practice in a specific region.

For receptions with a cocktail hour, money can be saved by having the servers pass around more expensive hors d'oeuvres instead of placing them on a table where people will probably flock to devour them. If servers walk around with trays of shrimp, most people won't take more than one piece. You could then have the least expensive things, such as cheese and crackers and vegetables, set out on the table.

There can also be savings with children and vendors. Work out how many children will be at the event. For a plated event, less expensive options should be made available for children. Vendors should also be fed but at a cheaper rate. They do not have to have the same expensive meal as the guests. You cannot leave the vendors out of the food service altogether. They must be fed. Caterers can easily put together sandwich trays, chips and/or cookies for vendors. All of them have to be fed, including every member of the band or DJ.

All the food and beverages associated with rentals will be covered by the reception budget. Rentals such as tableware, linens, chairs etc. may be available from the caterer but may be less expensive if rented from outside vendors. You must work out the policy of both the caterer and the venue before you engage the services of any outside vendors for these specific items. It is important to mention here that you must never use unlicensed caterers as this may compromise guests' safety. Using a family member as a chef or bartender may also put guests at some risk and should be avoided. Having food stations around the venue may seem like a good way to save money but is usually not the case. Hors d'oeuvres can cost as much as £3 each or more. This will add up quickly if the couple want around six food stations.

Catering Styles

Couples must decide on the reception and catering style they want for their wedding right at the beginning. There are a few options to choose from, including the following:

- Afternoon Tea
- Cocktail Style
- Buffet (sit-down or standing)
- Luncheon
- Finger Food
- Sit-down formal dinner

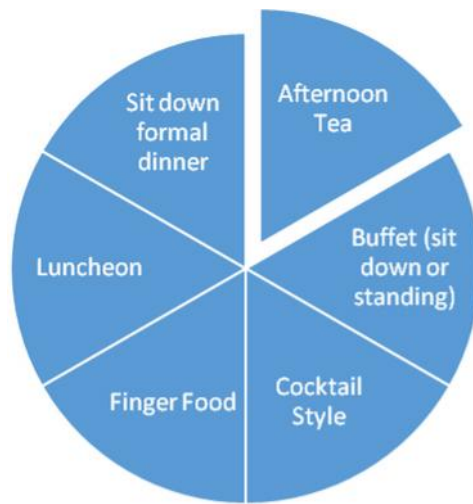


Fig. 6.1

When the reception style has been chosen, make sure the caterer you've selected is able to accommodate this. In some cases, a caterer will only specialise in one style (such as finger food or buffet only). Make sure you choose a caterer who has experience in the catering type you have selected. Some caterers also only cater for a certain number of guests; therefore, you must know how many people will attend the reception.

Questions for the Caterer

Irrespective of the reception type, you must still consider asking the caterer these questions when you have your meeting:

- What style of catering do they provide? Buffet, finger food or sit-down dinner?
- Is there a maximum or minimum number of guests they cater for?
- What meal or food options are available?
- Can they cater for special dietary needs (gluten-free, vegetarian, diabetic, etc.)?
- Are the waiting staff provided and, if so, what is the ratio of staff to guests?
- Are menu changes possible?
- Do they provide the dinnerware, cutlery, tablecloths, glassware and napkins?
- Do they provide drinks (if desired)?
- Is there anything that they need in order to set up or operate?
- Is there anything that they do not provide?
- Are they insured?
- Do they clean up after guests have eaten?
- What are the final costings and will there be any added costs?
- What deposit is needed and when is final payment due?
- What is their cancellation / refund policy?
- Is there anything else that you should be made aware of?

Beverages

When the food has been organised, you must then think about the beverages. There are quite a few options as well as costs associated with the serving of the beverages. You will need to carefully consider them all including their pros and cons.

Tray Service

To help minimise costs, a couple might want a tray service. This is advantageous because it keeps the cost down and prevents the over-consumption of alcohol. Disadvantages include the possibility of a guest missing the drinks tray and then having to wait until the next round, or some guests perhaps wanting a few more drinks.

Open Bar

Having an open bar will give guests an opportunity to drink unlimited quantities of beverages throughout the reception. The bar staff will keep track of all guests' orders and then issue a bill at the end of the reception. For guests this is probably the 'ultimate' in wedding receptions. This may be the case but it is not the guests who will pay the bill at the end of the event.

Beverages on Guests' Tables

Placing bottles of wine, beer, soft drinks and/or juices on tables will allow guests to serve themselves whichever drinks they wish.

Bar Tab

Bar tabs allow you to set a pre-determined amount of money, i.e. the 'bar tab', to cover drinks for the guests. The bar staff will keep a note of all the drinks ordered by the guests. Guests can order whenever they wish throughout the reception. When the bar tab limit has been reached, they will have to buy their own.

Cash Bar

A cash bar allows couples to free themselves of any beverage expenses. Here, guests must pay for their own drinks just like at any other bar. Many couples will choose this option combined with some of the ones mentioned above.

Self-Catering Beverages

In cases where the caterer or reception venue doesn't cater for alcohol or provide it, couples may be able to buy the alcohol and have it served by the waiting staff.

History of the Wedding Cake

The wedding cake tradition is very old. In fact, it dates back over 2,000 years to ancient Greece. Originally, fruit, nuts and honey were given as offerings to the gods. It was believed that this would ensure the gods blessed the marriage and bestow happiness on the couple getting married. It later developed into a tradition of showering the couple with little cakes. The guests would gather round the bride and eat leftover crumbs as a symbol of wealth, happiness and good luck.

Julius Caesar later brought this custom to Britain. The tradition developed and wedding cakes were shared with local villagers. Wedding cakes were usually reserved for wealthy families.

The tradition of the wedding cake has gradually evolved. In Scotland and England, wedding guests started bringing buns or little cakes for the couple. These delights were piled on top of each other until a large, sticky, and sweet tiered structure was formed. The couple would then have their first kiss over the pile of cakes, and if this was done successfully they would be blessed with prosperity, fertility and longevity.

One legend has it that a French chef came up with the idea of how to serve a tower of small cakes after seeing an English wedding. He decided that the cake piling was unhygienic and tedious, and he made his own tower of sweet buns. He held them together with a sticky, sweet toffee and the first wedding cake was born. It was called the croquembouche.

From this, many different adaptations were designed. Wedding cakes started being made with three tiers, looking like the croquembouche and also the spire of St. Bride's church in London. Bakers and chefs changed the base from sweets to fruit and slowly began to move away from the pastry of the croquembouche. These cakes were iced with white marzipan which symbolised the purity of the bride. Sugar was a very rare item and usually only affordable by wealthier people. The sweeter and whiter the icing, the wealthier the bride's family.

This three-tiered and iced fruitcake became the wedding cake of today. The newlyweds will cut the cake in the later stages of the reception. This was traditionally understood to symbolise the bride's impending loss of virginity. Today, of course, it is viewed as a happy gesture of celebration for the newlyweds and their new life together. It will then be cut into small pieces and served to all the guests, sometimes with coffee. Some people say that if the unmarried place a piece of wedding cake under their pillow, they'll dream about their future husband or wife.

Selecting the Wedding Cake

Today, many couples opt for more personal designs rather than the three-tiered fruitcake. Wedding cake trends are constantly changing and cake artists can create virtually anything for a couple, from chocolate mud wedding cake, to strawberry or vanilla crème mousse, to a 3D replica of a wedding car. The possibilities are endless.

Help your clients choose a wedding cake that reflects who they are and their personal taste and style. You could also tie in the cake with the theme or colour of the wedding.

Shape and Style

Many couples today are opting for individual styles and moving away from the traditional wedding cake style and size. Circular, oval, or square shaped cakes are still very popular. They could be on their own or piled on top of one another. Making each tier a different shape is a new and increasingly popular trend. Having a square for the base, an oval in the middle and a circular shape on top creates a very pleasing effect.

Many couples today like cakes that are in keeping with the theme and style of the wedding. For example, if a bride and groom are having a beach wedding, you might suggest a cake in the shape of a starfish or a beach ball. You might also like to match the cake pattern to the wedding dress design and use the icing to replicate the gown detail.

Another currently popular cake design is the 'present' cake which is three-tiered and styled as gift-wrapped presents stacked one on top of the other. These presents can be made in any style, shape or colour and they come with edible matching bows. This is a lovely surprise for the couple and guests. This cake style is a wonderful alternative to traditional wedding cakes.

Couples can have any style of cake they want and the only limit is their own imagination. Considering this, allow yourself to be creative with the designs and have lots of fun.

Wedding Cake Flavours

The flavour of a wedding cake is not limited either. Couples can have virtually any flavour they desire. The traditional fruitcake is still by far the most popular wedding cake. It has a rich flavour and keeps well, and it has also long been the symbol of longevity and fidelity. It is also sturdy which makes it very suitable for larger cakes which are heavily decorated. In the hotter months it is unlikely to melt, which is very helpful for those choosing summer weddings.

For the many reasons mentioned above, do not overlook the traditional fruitcake. As well as all the other positives, it is also possible to keep this cake and store it for the future, perhaps to be eaten on the first wedding anniversary or the birth of a first child.

Cake artists are usually quite adventurous when it comes to wedding cake textures and flavours. Some have decided against the traditional fruitcake and choose instead a variety of different flavours. Chocolate mud cake, for example, is actually as popular as the traditional fruitcake because it tastes great and is also a strong and versatile base for wedding cakes. It can be covered or decorated in almost any kind of icing – ganache, fondant, more traditional 'heavy' icing, fruit, and confectionary, to name a few.

The mud cake is another good choice for weddings held in hotter months. You just need to be careful with the icing you choose. It can also be kept frozen for two or three months after the event and therefore can be enjoyed when couples return from their honeymoon. If a couple wish to keep a piece or

two of their wedding cake for their first anniversary or birth of a child, the traditional fruitcake is a better choice.

Some couples will not want a fruitcake or a mud cake. Below are some other suggestions that you might recommend to clients:

- Banana
- A crepe wedding cake (made from crepes)
- Butter cake
- Black forest
- Carrot cake
- Caramel mud
- Chocolate mousse
- Cheesecake
- Croquembouche
- Cupcakes (made into a tower)
- Crème brûlée
- Ice cream
- Meringue
- Mocha
- Marble mud
- Orange/Madeira
- Nougatine
- Strawberry Mousse
- Sponge
- White chocolate
- Vanilla Crème

The list could go on and on...

Another alternative is to have a variety of flavours for a wedding cake. For example, the bottom layer might be dark chocolate, the middle layer white chocolate mud, and the top layer caramel.

Another decision to make is whether or not to include a filling. Some popular cake fillings include milk, dark or white chocolate, coconut, mocha, hazelnut, strawberry crème, mousse, caramel or a choice of jams or preserve fillings.

It is suggested that you meet with the cake artist to sample some of their culinary delights before you decide on a specific flavour. If a couple have a favourite dessert or cake that isn't on the cake-maker's list, just ask. It is likely that they will be able and willing to create something to suit any individual tastes and needs.

Selecting the Cake Size

The cake size will usually be determined by the number of guests invited to the wedding. Cake artists can also make cakes 'look' larger or smaller according to the couple's wishes.

If a couple want a big 'showstopper' but are inviting only a small number of guests, it is still possible to give them the big cake show they desire. One way of doing this is to add fake tiers or false sections to the cake and decorate them with icing to make them look like a real part of the cake. When it's time to cut the cake, the false sections are removed, leaving just the edible layers which will then be served. A reputable cake-maker will ensure that neither the couple nor their guests notice the difference between the real part of the cake and the false parts.

If a couple would like a smaller cake design but have a lot of guests, they could opt for a separate cutting cake to be made. In this way, the couple can have their smaller cake which they can cut at the reception, while another one will be cut in the kitchen and then served to the guests. These options allow couples to have exactly what type of cake they want regardless of the number of guests.

The size of the cake should be decided upon based on whether a couple want to serve the cake as a dessert for the guests, with their coffee, or as a slice to take home. The usual size would be a 5 cm by 2.5 cm cake slice. The cake artist will help work this out and make sure the cake is big enough to provide a slice for everyone.

It is a good idea to provide a few extra slices for the parents or any special guests who have perhaps helped out with the wedding.

Selecting the Cake Decorations

Once the flavour, style and size of the wedding cake have been decided, it's time to think about the decoration. Fruitcakes and mud cakes allow almost any type of decoration. Other cake types, however, may have limitations. Cheesecakes, sponges and mousses, for example, can only handle lightweight icing and decoration. Traditional 'heavy' icing will actually crush the cake. The most popular cake toppings or icings include:

- Traditional white, soft icing (this can be coloured to match a wedding theme)
- Chocolate
- Ganache
- Rolled fondant icing (especially for a smooth and elegant look)
- Cream
- Fruit
- Confectionery
- Marzipan
- Cream cheese (for banana or carrot cake in particular)

The colour of the icing may be tied in with the bridesmaids' dresses or any other wedding colour themes. Once you have decided on the icing you can then begin thinking about finishing touches which will include more specific decorations.

Today, cake decorations are becoming unique and more personalised to reflect the couple's personalities. The old cake toppers of a plastic bride and groom, for example, are not used as often. Many brides choose to decorate their cakes with sentimental items such as intricate crystal designs or hand-crafted replicas of the bride and groom. These can be kept as a memento.

Many wedding cakes are still decorated with flowers made of edible icing or silk. Also popular are fresh flowers, which can be ordered by the cake artist. Florists and cake artists might also work together to make sure the flowers on the cake match the wedding bouquet, or any other floral arrangements.

Fresh flowers always add a lovely touch to any wedding cake. They can also be made into various formations, from cascading bouquets to small arrangements. This can be discussed with the cake vendor in order to decide upon the most suitable flowers and arrangement for the cake design.

Other very popular decorations include lace, tulle and ribbons. These can complement any wedding colour scheme. Ornaments which represent the interests of the bride and groom, such as a snow ski or a surf board, can also be used. It is important to remember that there are now so many choices of wedding cake that couples can have exactly what they want.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Food, Beverages and the Wedding Cake

- Ensure that the pastry chef and caterer are licensed and insured. Permits may sometimes be needed if using an off-premises caterer.
- Make sure you mention any menu or dietary restrictions in the first meeting with the caterer to find out whether they can accommodate your needs.
- Have tasting sessions with your chosen caterer and/or pastry chef.
- Consider having a signature drink which matches the wedding theme.
- Ask caterers to specify the staffing ratio.
- Ensure that all taxes, staffing, delivery, equipment, gratuities and other fees are included in the proposal estimates of the caterer.
- Establish how long the caterer will need for set-up and teardown.
- Think about the formality of the reception and any venue restrictions when choosing a service style.
- Pass around the most expensive hors d'oeuvres instead of setting them out on a table.
- Consider downsizing the ceremonial cake and supplementing with a sheet cake to reduce costs.
- Avoid butter cream icing during warmer months.

Photography

Photography accounts for around 10% of a wedding budget but many couples spend even more than that. This is because the memories captured on film and in photos will last a lifetime. Many consultants advise their clients to find the best photographer they can afford because of the importance of wedding photos.

There have been many changes in technology and they have revolutionised wedding photography. Below you will learn about (1) the movement from film to digital photography, (2) the two main styles of photography, and (3) album designs and trends in photography.

The Movement from Film to Digital Photography

Most wedding photographers now use digital equipment instead of film because it offers clients a lot more benefits. Firstly, the digital improvements which have occurred in the past few years provide colour, saturation and sharpness which are all superior to anything film could achieve. Secondly, digital technology allows photographers to do online proofing. This means that clients and their guests can go through all the proofs regardless of where they reside. Thirdly, digital technology allows almost instant feedback.

Lastly, it is easy to safely store digital images in many different locations. This prevents the loss of any original work. Many people, however, believe that digital media are cheaper to use than film. The top photographers actually use about five or more very high-end computers which have enormous storage capacity in order to handle the huge processing flow. They also have to constantly update camera equipment and have the latest technology. In fact, digital processing usually takes around three times more effort than film processing. This is due to the high number of images that are captured and to the creativity that is involved in modern album designing. When advising your clients and comparing prices, make sure that the photographer's packages include the photo shoot time, the production time, the album design, any reprint costs, and other options regarding access to the digital negatives.

Choosing a Photographer

Choosing the right photographer is a really important part of planning any wedding. It can appear a daunting task but there are a few simple steps you should follow to make sure everything goes well on the big day.

Some couples prefer a photojournalistic style, while many photographers still adhere to the traditional style of photography. As the consultant, you must present both styles and let your clients choose the one they feel would best suit them. The number of images taken by a photographer on a wedding day will vary depending on personal approach and style. Therefore, it will be necessary to consider this when comparing photographers. You should advise your clients to meet with at least two photographers to get to know them in person and to look at their sample albums. A photographer's personality is as important

as his/her skills, and couples must feel that they can easily get along with the photographer they choose. Every couple will have an idea of what their album should look like. As the consultant, you will be the main point of contact between the two parties; you can advise the photographer what picture types are preferred and also collect the ones that will feature in the images. This will allow the couple to enjoy their wedding day while you do the running around, assembling the bridal party, family and friends for key photos. A photographer must also be aware of any cultural needs your clients may have. The time and place and the 'how' of wedding photos can vary quite a lot depending on culture.

Consider the Client's Photographic Needs

Once you have made appointments to meet with various photographers, you must think about what your clients actually need from them and exactly what your expectations are, regarding both their work and personal style.

Questions for the Photographer

Make sure you have questions prepared before meeting with the photographer. Below is a list which may assist you:

- Does the photographer have any recent examples of his/her work? - This is usually in the form of a display album. Make sure the albums you view are examples of the actual photographer's work and not someone else who works for the same studio/company.
- Is the photographer you actually meet with (at your appointment) the one who will be taking the photos on the wedding day? Often studios have more than one photographer, and it could be that the one you meet with may not be the one who will be booked for the ceremony.
- How long have you been working in the industry, and what are your qualifications? - Experience could make a big difference when it comes to wedding photography.
- Are you (or your studio) accredited with any professional associations?
- Do you use film or digital cameras (or perhaps both)?
- Do you have back-up equipment? (If you, as the consultant, are familiar with photographic equipment, you might ask about the type of cameras and lenses used, etc.)
- How much do you charge? - This is a tricky issue. Make sure you know exactly what you will get and how much it will cost. Check the section below for more information on wedding photography costs.
- Do you sign a contract with me? What does it involve and do you guarantee your work? – Make sure if *you* sign the contract with the photographer that you have read it and understood it in its entirety. You could compare contracts from one photographer to the next to ensure that you are getting the 'best deal.' Always obtain an original copy for your records.
- How long do you take to prepare and deliver the album after the wedding?
- Will the couple be able to keep the negatives (if the photos are film) or a copy of the photos on disc (if in digital format)? If so, are there any extra costs for this service?
- Are there any optional extras available that we should know about? - A lot of photographers offer many extras when it comes to wedding photography. This might include options such as

parents' albums, pre-wedding portraits, enlargements, photo frames, and extra pages for the wedding albums.

Viewing the Portfolio of the Photographers

When you meet with a photographer, you will have an opportunity to look through a portfolio of his/her work. These are usually display albums, but they will vary for each photographer. This is your opportunity to look for whatever your clients prefer; hence, you must know what you are actually looking for. Checking the quality and clarity is essential.

Here are a few things to think about when looking through the photos:

- What are your first impressions? Do you like what you see? Do these photos catch your eye?
- What do you feel when looking at the photos? Do you sigh in awe or disappointment at the photos?
- Are the photos the type that you dream of or dread for your wedding album?
- Do the people in the photos look content and happy?
- Do the photos look natural or 'posed/set up'?
- Are the colours bright and crisp, and do they have good clarity?
- Is the technical aspect good?
- Are the photos in focus?
- Are the layouts and designs of the albums appealing to you?
- Are the photos printed on good quality paper and have they been well presented?
- Are the wedding albums of a style that suits your tastes and budget? Are there several to choose from?
- Are the pages used in the wedding albums acid-free?
- Are the albums well-constructed and do they protect the photos from dust and light?
- Can additional pages be added to the albums?

Do not be afraid to be critical when looking through portfolios and display albums. You will pay good money for wedding photos, and you only get one chance at taking them.

Wedding Photography Cost

The costs will vary from one photographer to another. You should be able to find a very 'general' consensus amongst them regarding the different fees that they charge and any optional extras.

The following list will give you a general idea of costs you may encounter regarding wedding day photos:

- A set price package deal which includes wedding ceremony, reception, album, photos etc. You must read through all the inclusions thoroughly to make sure you are aware of what is included and what is not.
- Location fees. In some cases, photographers may charge a fee if they have to travel over a certain distance to get to your wedding. Fees may also apply if you want to take photos at various locations throughout the day.
- Fees for any extra pages in the wedding album.

- A fee to remain present throughout the entire reception (after the ceremony).
- Extra fees for extra photos that you want taken (photographers may have limits on the amount that they will take in one day).
- Fees for different styles of photography. For example, photographers may provide only digital images and you may request film and digital.
- Assistants' fees.
- Fees for a copy of the negatives or images on disc.
- Fees for hand colouring on black and white prints.
- Fees for extra albums (such as parents' albums) etc.
- Fees for enlargement of photos.
- Fees for 'thank you' cards and envelopes.
- Fees for placing photos on the Internet.
- Framing fees.
- Fees for other custom designed options.

Photography Styles

Photojournalistic and traditional are the two main styles of photography. Think about the wedding albums of your parents or grandparents. You will probably see a lot of black and white pictures, all of them carefully posed. In the traditional style of photography, a reception may even be stopped to stage a moment. The couple, for example, might pretend to cut the wedding cake to strike a good pose. They will then move on to another staged moment. In the past, wedding albums would only have photos of the couple and groups lined up.

Table 6.3

Comparing Two Wedding Photography Styles	
Traditional Style	Photojournalistic Style
Posed	Natural
Directed	Candid
Staged	All Angles
Front and Centre	Spontaneous
Significant Communication	Little Communication
Hands-on	Hands-Off
Traditional mount album	Flush mount Album

The last ten years have seen the evolution of the photojournalistic style of wedding photography. This means that the photographer documents real moments, just like telling a story. It will be fluid, candid, spontaneous and versatile. Photos are taken from many different directions and certain angled positions instead of always being front and centre. Most couples still want a few staged photos but most images will be of real moments.

Most of the time, a photographer will have at least one assistant (more if the guest list tops 500). Using an assistant, one photographer will be able to shoot images of the bride preparing herself and another of

the groom getting ready. At the ceremony and reception venues, one photographer might be on the floor while the other takes an overhead shot from a balcony. It is also important to note that some venues have very strict policies on photographer locations and on flashes. Experienced photographers will know how to use available light instead of a flash. They know how to be unobtrusive, use telephoto lenses, and collect images from the back of the ceremony.

Album Design and Photography Trends

The two different styles of photography will obviously produce different albums. The traditional album will have photographs which are bound and also bordered. The couple will be able to open the page and pull out the photograph. With digital photojournalistic photography, a flush mount album is produced. This allows a photo or group of photos to constitute the actual page, much like pictures in a magazine. The top flush mount album companies actually offer a 200-year guarantee. The pages are coated and are thus protected from any fading or spills etc.

Remember that you will get what you pay for; the leading photography companies will offer superior quality and it will come at a price. Only the best companies will have a patented binding system which will allow the centre seam to be flat, thus giving a panoramic spread but without the bulky midpoint.

Album sizes have also increased due to the flush-mounted album. Traditionally, a couple would have only one album and some individual photos reprinted for close family and friends. Today, a duplicate of the entire album in smaller sizes can be achieved.

Couples usually want some colour and some black and white photos. With the flush-mounted style, you will get a seamless integration of both. Sepia or black and white photos are timeless. The absence of bright colours lets the viewer focus on certain details; thus, rather than noticing the yellows and pinks in a flower bouquet, the eye will be drawn to the petal shape and the curve of the ribbon. Black and white is also more forgiving in cases of inconsistent makeup or perhaps an unexpected stain on a white piece of clothing. The black and white photos allow more consistent documentation.

Advise clients to ask about average processing times for a wedding album. These times may be influenced by a photographer's style and the process for creating and designing the album post wedding, clients' turnaround time including proof reviews, final selections and feedback of album layout, and the album company itself and its production time.

Fig. 6.2

A lack of bright colours allows the viewer to focus on specific details.

There are three other specific trends in photography. These are: engagement photos, photo guest books, and photo-video hybrids. The best photographers will have engagement photo sessions two or three times a year. Autumn and spring are the usual times. Often, the photographers will choose a lovely outdoor setting and will meet with twelve or more clients over a few hours instead of making individual appointments. These engagement photos can be used for save-the-date cards, newspaper announcements, or holiday greetings cards.

More recently, the trend has been to flush-mount the engagement photos to create a more personalised guest book. The photo-video hybrid is able to capture audio too and this is a good option for couples who wish to capture specific moments such as the exchange of their wedding vows, or perhaps a vocalist singing their signature song. More creative placement of the images in slide shows with music can be achieved through digital photography and certain related software products. Digital capabilities are continually evolving and more couples may decide to hire photo-video hybrid specialists.

Plan for the Day

When the couple have chosen their photographer, you must hold a meeting in advance to plan for the photos. This is done to ensure that you and the photographer have the same understanding of exactly how the day should proceed and that the client's photographic needs are covered.

During the meeting, you should discuss the travel time, sunset time, traffic, ceremony and reception beginning and finishing times, and the weather. You will need to have back-up locations in case of bad weather.

Consultant Checklist and Photography Reminders

- Familiarise clients with both traditional and photojournalistic photography styles. Include sample albums which will determine the ones that best suit their personalities.
- Make yourself aware of the engagement photography dates available for those photographers who hold them - perhaps two or three times each year.
- Assist clients to make a list of “must have” photos, i.e. the ones they want to be taken.
- Make sure you are familiar with the rules for photography at places of worship or reception venues.
- Check to make sure the photographer will have an assistant on the wedding day.
- Ask the photographer about his/her average number of images at weddings.
- Determine whether the chosen photographer will shoot entirely in colour or have a percentage of black and white photos.
- When you compare packages, make sure the photographer’s options include the photo shoot time, the design and production times, album options, any reprint costs, and the option to purchase the digital negatives.

Floral Décor

Flowers and other related elements of decoration will set the mood/tone of a wedding. They are also a significant expense accounting for around 7% (or more) of the budget.

Firstly, let’s discuss the bridal bouquet. This dates all the way back to ancient times when brides and grooms would wear a garland around their necks. These were mostly made from strong scented herbs and spices which people believed contained mystical powers that would ward off bad spirits. Moreover, the shape of the garland, which is, of course, circular, was symbolic of new life, hope and fertility; hence, it was worn like a blessing for the couple.

The usual custom would involve the bride gathering some of the blooms and foliage from each garland to create a small posy which she would carry to the ceremony. The modern-day bridal posy which is now made up mostly of flowers, replaced this ancient tradition. There have been many different variations over time, from small posies to arm sheaves and longer bouquets in the early 1900s. Later, there came the teardrop and princess bouquets in the 1980s. Flowers have therefore become a very important accessory for a bride. Today, this floral tradition is still strong and flowers therefore have a very important role in today’s weddings. Floral displays will also be used for other aspects of the wedding. There might be bouquets, posies, boutonnieres, pew decorations, centrepieces and corsages. You might include any or all of these.

The role of flowers at a wedding cannot be underestimated. One must take time and carefully consider the floral decorations for a wedding day. The flowers should complement the style, colour and theme of a wedding, and leave a lasting impression.

The bridal bouquet is a good place to start when choosing the flowers. The bouquet will probably be the most photographed flower arrangement at the wedding and should therefore inform choices for the rest of the wedding party and, indeed, the rest of the floral décor. When choosing flowers for a wedding, there are five main things to consider: the season, the colours, the scent, the size and the shape.

Firstly, the availability of floral elements will be dictated by the season. People who are on a limited budget usually have some creative flair and could buy most of their floral decorations at a farmers' market. These markets are seasonal but also have the best blooms in local areas at those times. Many floral designers also use local materials as well as having a list of international distributors from whom they can purchase more flowers, ensuring they have flowers of all kinds available throughout the year.

In some cases, the most popular wedding flowers have very short seasons. A good example would be lily of the valley which has a season of just three to four weeks in May. These small stems might cost as much as £15 each and very small bouquets can start at £400. In fact, these flowers are so expensive that many florists won't stock them. Flowers which have a very short season are usually extremely expensive; therefore it will be necessary to work closely with your florist to make sure you know their seasons. If a specific flower is not available, some florists can offer silk accents or arrangements.

Another consideration when choosing the flowers is the colour. Usually, a bride will choose an all-white bouquet. This gives a fresh and elegant look. The main focus of the day really should be the bride (and groom); thus, if the bride is carrying dark coloured flowers against a white gown the eye will be drawn to the flowers and not the person carrying them. Around 30% of brides will have some colour mixture in their bouquets, usually light coloured ones – pale yellow, pink, lilac or peach. Bolder and darker bouquets are becoming more popular and make quite a dramatic statement. Simple gowns benefit from more dramatic flower arrangements while more elaborate gowns are complemented by simple floral bouquets.

Bridesmaids' bouquets tend to be mixed with some brighter colours. The emerging trend today, however, is for bridesmaids to carry a small purse, a fan, or a muff highlighted with silk or real flowers. This chosen ornament will usually be a gift from the bride.

The scent of the flower arrangement for the wedding is another consideration. This is important when choosing the centrepieces as a heavy scent will probably interfere with the meal. Some flower varieties which should not be on the tables are gardenias, magnolias and stargazer lilies, to name but a few. Some of these flowers also bruise and brown very easily; therefore, it's better to use them in wreaths and not in table centrepieces.

The shape of the flowers is another point to consider. Bridal bouquets usually come in three main shapes: round, cascade, and hand-tied. The round and cascade bouquets have a well-arranged appearance. They are usually mounted on a bouquet holder which also has a handle. The classic round bouquet is made up of hundreds of very delicate stephanotis blossoms and each stem is hand-wrapped and tied. Pearl pins are often placed in the centre of each flower, giving it elegance, before it is brought

together into a ball. Round bouquets often tend to use roses. Round and hand-tied bouquets can also be collared, meaning they have a collar of green which creates a border around them. Hand-tied bouquets look more natural and can be tailored or have a mixed arrangement. Some bouquets which are hand-tied are held by a simple ribbon. Others might have the stems taped or wired and tied to complete the look.

A cascade bouquet is also known as a waterfall or teardrop shape. It is usually the biggest and heaviest. It incorporates long stems which give the bouquet its drape and length.

Size is something else to consider when choosing the floral décor for a wedding. In the past, the bride's bouquet tended to be bigger; however, large bouquets can sometimes overwhelm the bride and make her look as if she is all flower. A large bouquet is also too heavy for someone to carry around for long periods of time. Today, bridal bouquets are more compact and boutonnieres are considered better if they are smaller. The floral designer will advise that the boutonnieres match with an aspect of the bride's bouquet. Mini Calla lilies and single roses are very popular options and they can easily be coordinated.

The flowers must be in keeping with the style and theme of the wedding. They are intended to complement rather than overpower the bridal gown or gowns worn by the bridal party. Usually, for a traditional wedding you will need a traditional arrangement such as masses of roses. Contemporary weddings, however, are more effective using single blooms such as lilies complemented by lush greenery. Couples and the consultant should carefully consider the wedding theme and any advice the floral designer gives as well as any of the ideas mentioned below.

Traditional

A formal, traditional, arrangement usually consists of masses of one type of flower. Some examples would include tulips or roses. Roses are still the most popular choice for many brides today. Remember that large bouquets are quite heavy to carry.

Sophisticated and Elegant

A wedding with a more sophisticated theme will need a smaller posy with elegant blooms which will complement the bride's gown and maybe even combine colours from the bridesmaids' gowns. A wired posy of orchids, frangipanis wrapped in ribbon stems, or perhaps a string of pearls or crystals will blend with the bridal gown and it is certain to look stunning. Tropical leaves surrounding oriental lily flowers are another way of making elegant accessories with flowers.

Bright and Fun

Bright blooms are mostly seen in summer wedding ceremonies but they will create a warming effect for a winter wedding. Pink and yellow frangipanis, gerberas, hot pink lilies, and tuber roses provide a dramatic and bright impact. These are colourful blooms and will be perfect for garden or beach weddings. They bring a sense of happiness and fun. Exotic foliage and blooms, the use of seeds and berries, and vines also complement bright, fun arrangements. You can be as creative as you want and

allow the floral designer you choose to experiment with colours and some daring displays which will leave the guests with a lasting impression.

Romantic

When you think of romance, think of garden fresh flowers. Perfumed flowers such as lavender, freesias, roses, and hyacinths make beautiful bouquets mixed with sweet scented geranium or strawberry leaves, and they are sure to produce an ambience of romance. A romantic theme is also complemented by soft pastels.

Modern

Modern flower arrangements use simplicity and this is the key to their success. Simple blooms such as orchids and lilies are popular and are nicely complemented by lush greenery. These make lovely modern bouquets. Berries and foliage are fashionable for today's brides as well as pepper berries, rose hips, hypericum and cranberry viburnum. There are many exotic and beautiful variations and choices that will make your flowers stand out.

The colour of wedding blooms is equally important and must be given careful consideration. The right colour combinations will guarantee that the flowers complement the gowns, their fabrics, and other accessories. Flowers are intended to complement rather than overwhelm or overshadow the colour scheme of the wedding. Take a swatch of fabric from the bride's and bridesmaids' dresses when you meet with the floral designer and discuss any ideas you have for the bloom colours and how they'll work with the wedding colours. Also discuss the bridal jewelry and accessories' colours because gems and other precious metals can influence the bouquet colours.

Flowers for All Seasons

It is important to think carefully about whether or not the bloom you choose is actually in season and, therefore, easily available. If your clients really want a beautiful tulip bouquet for their summer wedding, or perhaps some sunflowers to bring warmth to a winter bouquet, you need to assess whether the choice of flowers for the bouquet is practical. There are many factors that will have an influence on the choice of flowers, including where the clients live and the weather at the time of year when the wedding will be held. These factors will have an impact on the availability of the blooms.

Roses and lilies are the most popular wedding flowers and are largely available all year. Some varieties of flowers may not be, however, as they are subject to seasonality. Despite this, good florists can usually source desired flowers from home or abroad. Even though this option is possible, it may not be the best course of action. One factor to take into account is the weather. Shipping tulips in during warmer times will not necessarily ensure they will not wilt during the wedding day. In such circumstances it's better to go for seasonal flower varieties. No bride wants to have a bruised or wilted bouquet.

The most popular wedding flower varieties are listed below, as well as the season in which they will be their best.

Spring

Azaleas, Boronias, Cyclamen, Daffodils, Dahlias (late spring), Hyacinths, Jonquils (early spring), Lilacs, Peony Roses, Phalaenopsis orchids, Poppies, Queen Anne's Lace, Rhododendron, Ranunculus, Sweet Williams, Tulips, Tuberoses, Yellow Bells, and Zinnia.

Autumn

Chrysanthemum, Cattleya orchids, Daffodils, Dahlias, Hyacinths, Hydrangeas, Misty, Nerines, Tulips, and Zinnia.

Winter

Azalea, Apple blossoms, Blushing brides, Cyclamens, Hyacinths, Jonquils, Love in a Mist, Poppies, Rhododendrons, Sweet Williams, Tulips, and Violets.

Summer

Agapanthus, Christmas bells, Christmas bush, Dahlias, Frangipanis, Ginger, Hibiscus, Hydrangeas, Lilacs, Lily-of-the-valley, Marigold, Misty, Poinsettia, Queen Anne's lace, Tuberoses, Violets (Jan), and Zinnia.

All Year Round

African Violets, Alstromerias, Asiatic lilies, Asters, Baby's Breath, Begonias, Birds of Paradise (Feb-Oct), Camellias, Carnations, Cornflower, Daisies, Delphiniums, Exotic leaves, Forget-Me-Nots, Freesias, Gerberas, Gladiolus, Eucalyptus, Iris, Ivy, Jasmine, Lavender, Lisianthus, Maidenhair ferns, November Lily, Orchid, Oriental lily, Paper daisy, Peace lily, Peony, Roses, Snapdragons, Sunflowers, Sweet Peas.

Four things to take into consideration when choosing the flowers are:

- (1) the recipients and the locations that require flowers;
- (2) choosing flowers;
- (3) centrepieces and any other decorative elements; and
- (4) the installation and removal.

Recipients and Locations

- Bridal bouquets
- Toss bouquets
- Other bridal flowers (e.g., hair, dresses)
- Number of bridesmaids, (this includes the maid of honour)
- Number of flower girls (petals/basket)
- Number of mothers (corsages/nosegays)
- Number of grandmothers (corsages/nosegays)
- Other women needing personal flowers
- Groom's boutonniere
- Number of groomsmen, (this includes the best man)

- Number of ushers
- Ring bearer (boutonniere and pillow)
- Number of fathers
- Number of grandfathers
- Other men needing personal flowers

The “other” category may include people such as the officiant, the readers, any soloists, the guestbook attendant, and, in some cases, if flowers are used for favours, all the guests. For instance, the company ‘Speaking Roses’ (2006) will custom-emboss flowers with personalised messages or photographs. This brings a unique type of monogrammed flavour to a wedding.

Ceremony



Reception

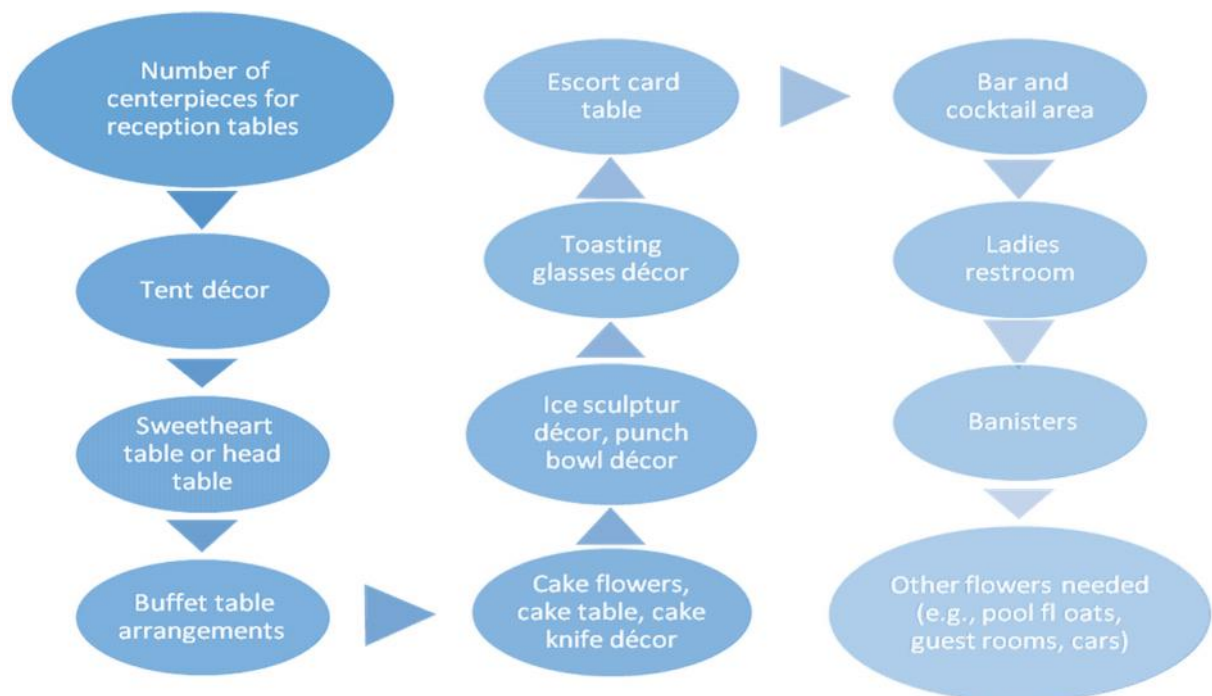


Fig. 6.3

The first chance to make a great impression will be at the entrance to the ceremony site. Here you will also have the chance to tie in the wedding theme. Before entering, most of the guests will only have seen save-the-date cards and the invitation; therefore, it is at the entrance that the stage will be set for the entire day. When considering flower placement and any greenery at the entrance location, it is important to remember that garlands will provide a graceful and gentle welcome for the guests without adding too much expense.

The doorway with a hint of colour, such as wreaths, swags, or garlands made from berries, leaves, herbs, pine, or ribbons and twigs artfully arranged, will make a big impact but will not be a great expense. Another choice would be ornamental trees or topiaries trimmed in different unique shapes which will add an ethereal feel when combined with bows or tulle.

If the clients like this idea, they can rent trees or large potted plants. This will be cost-effective and will also make a bold statement. Entrances can be marked beautifully with floral wreaths, and because of their portability wreaths can be moved from the ceremony site to the reception and then to the brunch the next day. A wreath can then be dried and kept for many years after the wedding. Wreaths do not have to be round; they can also be made into heart shapes, squares, and vertical shapes, all offering a distinctive option.

For outdoor weddings, wreaths can offer a focal point for the actual ceremony if one is not obvious. Outdoor weddings don't need as many flowers beyond the focal point as the outdoors will provide a lot of the scenery as well. Weddings held outside allow floral décor along aisle runners as well as real petals to be used by flower girls. Indoor ceremonies often prohibit these due to the fact that they can stain wood and carpeted floors, and even at outdoor weddings you should choose a lighter coloured petal because darker ones could stain the bride's gown. Silk petals which are darker in colour can also stain as the dyes that are used on them often leave marks.

Canopies, arches, or other structures where couples will stand can be found at both indoor and outdoor weddings. These structures are beautifully highlighted with flowers. Arrangements are usually placed close to the couple and they bring elegance to any ceremony photograph. Pews and rows can be marked by pomanders, which are little flower balls.

Centrepieces and Other Decorative Elements

Most couples will be quite traditional when choosing their bouquets, boutonnieres and ceremony décor. To add some contrast and bring a contemporary feel to a traditional wedding, choose centrepieces and other decorative components that make a more modern statement. Upon entering the reception site, guests will usually see the escort card table first, and this is a key focal point which could set the tone for the reception. This table is usually decorated quite lavishly. For example, a wedding with a beach theme might have an escort table with cards surrounded by sand, exotic flowers and shells.

The budget will limit the centrepiece options as well as the floral designer's creativity. Some couples continue to choose the more classic designs such as candelabras interlaced with flowers. Other couples use the designer's imagination and have elaborate flower arrangements tied into their wedding theme. A

difference in the floral décor formality can exist but it should not be so dramatic that it results in an imbalance.

The trend in centrepieces today is to use large glass vases of different modern shapes on top of which are flowers sitting in a plastic, removable riser. Underneath this tray anything can be placed, such as berries, vegetables, bright fruits, coloured lights, glass, or live grass growing in soil. These are just a few ideas but there are many more. The sky is the limit.

The size of the centrepieces must be dictated by the size of the table upon which they will be placed. As a general rule, make sure the centrepiece isn't so big that it inhibits conversation. Once a couple has decided on a centrepiece, most florists will want a sample showing to enable the clients to see their choice and discuss any necessary changes with the designer. The larger arrangements, such as rented palm trees or bamboo for tropical themes, should be displayed prominently to reassure the couple that their investment was worthwhile. Certain flower types, such as alstroemeria or carnations, are usually avoided at weddings as they are often seen to be 'grocery store flowers.' Don't let this thinking influence you, however, because these flowers can make spectacular wreaths and arrangements that would not otherwise be affordable. Add some greenery, some unique twigs or bold ribbon and it can truly make an impressive statement for a lower price.

Before meeting with the florist, it's best to inform the clients of any charges they may incur for packing, delivery, installation and removal. Such fees can often be quite high depending on the design complexity, the travel distance, and the size of the order. You can probably expect a minimum fee of £150. The installation charges are mostly based on time, and in certain cases the large arrangements have to be built on site as they cannot be transported. An example would be a floral chuppah which must be raised and also decorated at the actual venue. This will take at least an hour to set up. To decorate a tent with flowers and greenery on each pole will take several hours. If the ceremony and reception are to be held at the same site, the floral designer has to wait there until the ceremony is over before making the changeover. This could increase the cost, but it may be the same as the travel charge which will apply if the ceremony and reception take place at separate locations.

Most venues prohibit the use of nails and tape. Hanging designs will therefore be installed with decorative ropes or clips, and ribbons. Once the floral designer has completed the installation, you should inspect it to ensure that all areas are neat and clean and that no extra materials or rubbish have been left behind.

The removal will also be handled by the floral designer. It's quite common for the ceremony arrangements to be transported to the site of the reception. You must ascertain the policies regarding floral décor in houses of worship because some places require a donation while others will insist they be removed. Others do not allow any floral décor at all. If flowers have to remain, couples will usually choose more modest flower decorations.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Floral Décor

- Ask your clients to make a list of everyone who will be receiving personal flowers before your meeting with the florist.

- Remember that seasonality will often dictate availability and price.
- Your local farmers' markets are excellent places to find flowers for clients who are working on a stricter budget.
- The flowers create a focal point for the ceremony and set the scene for a wedding.
- Dark petals of both the live and the silk type can easily stain carpets, floors and clothing.
- Ensure that the clients budget for the packing, delivery, installation and removal of the floral décor.
- Familiarise yourself with the policies of all the ceremony and reception venues you will use.

Music

Music will enhance any occasion, and wherever there is celebration there is music! Couples will want to choose their special music, be it for the seating of the guests or the newlyweds' farewell. Your clients will rely on you as the wedding planner to guide them when choosing a soundtrack for their special day. Music should always be used to enhance rather than overshadow any point of a wedding day. It is used to show the couple's commitment to each other. Consider each stage of the wedding day carefully as you choose the music. Different types of music will be required for the ceremony, for the cocktail hour, and different stages of the reception.

Ceremony Music

Clients will probably turn to you for music recommendations for the wedding ceremony. You will have to assist your clients to choose the right music to accentuate significant moments during the ceremony and reception, from the entrance of the bride to the recessional. The music will set the atmosphere and tone of an event. Softer and more subtle music is usually chosen for the time before and during the ceremony, while more upbeat music is chosen for the dance floor at the reception.

One of the first decisions to make is whether to have live music or recorded music and in what form. Options might include a string quartet, a soloist, live bands, a DJ, or a simple MP3 or CD recording. Clients could choose a variety of these or only one. Just make sure that the music chosen suits the bride and groom's personal style as well as their budget.

The guide below may be of assistance:

Dramatic

- Choir
- Bagpipes
- String quartets.

Formal

- Harpists
- Classical singers
- Pianists
- Organists

- Violinists
- String quartets
- Trumpeters

Fun

- Live bands
- DJs
- Guitarists
- Jukebox
- Jazz Ensembles
- Pop ensembles
- Pianists
- Singers
- Vocal ensembles
- Saxophone quartets

Romantic

- Harpists
- Classical guitarists
- Pianists
- Flautists
- String quartets
- Violinists
- Singers

Questions To Ask the Entertainer

As with all things regarding the wedding, make sure you have some questions prepared for the entertainers before you have your meeting with them. Have a look at the questions below:

- Do they have a demo CD of their recent work? - Demo CDs give a fair indication of the DJs /band / entertainer's style and their repertoire. The downside is that a demo CD often contains only brief examples of the entertainer's work – you may not get the 'entire' picture.
- Can we view the DJ / band/ entertainer live? - This is actually the best way of discovering exactly what you'll be getting. If you are happy with their live performance, you will probably have gained quite an accurate impression of what they will bring to your wedding.
- Is the DJ / band / entertainer registered as a business and are they insured? - This is important. They should be recognised as a wedding business and also be fully insured, including public liability insurance.
- How long has the band been together or the DJ / entertainer been performing? Do they have much experience of weddings? - It is important that the entertainers have experience of performing together and are also familiar with weddings.
- Are they able to deliver the music / entertainment that we want to for our wedding? - Discuss your needs to ensure that you are 'on the same page' regarding the wedding requirements.

- Do they have a copy of their song list? – Make sure the list includes songs or music that your clients want to hear on their wedding day.
- Are they willing to add compilations or songs to your music list upon request? - If there is a particular song that you cannot see on the list, ask if it's possible for it to be added. When dealing with DJs, this should be simple enough. However, a band or soloist may have to learn the lyrics and practise with their musicians. Bear in mind that this may incur additional costs.
- Do they have back-up singers or staff to step in if someone is unable to attend the performance? - The wedding day must not be spoiled by an entertainer's inability to attend the wedding on the day for whatever reason.
- How much do they charge? – Make sure you know exactly what you are getting and how much it will cost.
- Do we sign a contract with them and what does it involve? Do they guarantee their work? – Make sure that if you sign a contract with the entertainer, you have read it in its entirety and clearly understand it. It's a good idea to compare contracts from one entertainer to another to check that you're getting the 'best deal.' Always get a copy of the original for your records.

You will have to book an entertainer around 9-12 months before the wedding, at least. Popular entertainers are usually booked 12-18 months in advance for weddings; hence, make sure you allow enough time to check around.

Once you've booked the entertainment you must think about what music you want to be played during the different aspects of the wedding day. Information provided below will give you an idea of when to have certain music played. It will also provide you with popular music choices that many brides opt for today.

The wedding ceremony can be seen as having five main parts: the prelude, the processional, the ceremony, the recessional, and the postlude.

Prelude

The musical prelude for a ceremony sets the scene for the service which will follow. The music chosen should be a reflection of the couple's personalities, the formality of the ceremony, and the setting. If a wedding is taking place on the beach, the prelude music might include steel drums, ukuleles, or slack key guitars. If the wedding is being held at St. Patrick's, a large, gothic-style, Catholic cathedral, a classical string quartet and a trumpet player is a suitable choice. You should plan for around 30-45 minutes of prelude music before changing to processional music.

Table 6.4

Options for Live Music During the Prelude
• Children's choir
• Chamber music ensemble (a small orchestra with strings, wind instruments, and percussion)
• Church choir
• Classical guitar
• Church organ
• Guitar, cello, and flute
• Flute and keyboard
• Gospel choir
• Harp
• Harp and flute
• Solo violin
• Piano
• String quartet (two violins, viola, and cello)
• Vocalist
• String trio (violin, viola, and cello)
• Wind trio or quartet (assorted wind instruments such as clarinet, flute, oboe, trumpet, French horn, bassoon)

The Processional

For the part when the wedding party walks down the aisle (the wedding processional), think about the aisle length and how many people will make up the wedding party itself before choosing the music. It's a good idea to time the aisle walk, especially with an unfamiliar venue. In some cases, the processional will only involve one song, but usually two or more songs are played to differentiate between the arrivals of the wedding party members and the bride. Processional music should build anticipation as the wedding party members enter, and should then continue to build until the bride appears.

The most traditional selection for processionals is *Bridal Chorus for Lohengrin* by Wagner. This is better known as the song *Here Comes the Bride*. Another popular option is the *Trumpet Voluntary* by Stanley, *Canon in D* by Pachelbel, and *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring* by Bach. For less traditional and more contemporary music, couples might choose Broadway show tunes, pop songs or classical jazz. The couple should decide (with your expert advice) what suits them. If a wedding is to take place in a house of worship, make sure you check that secular music choices are acceptable to the officiant well before the wedding day. In some cases, non-religious music may not be allowed.

The Ceremony

Musical interludes may occur during the ceremony. These may be played for group prayers, responses, taking communion, making special offerings, or lighting a unity candle. In these moments you might

incorporate a special hymn or another piece of music. Ceremonies usually include a soloist performance or perhaps a choir. If the clients choose to use musical interludes, make sure they are chosen well in advance and that they are co-ordinated with the officiant's needs. Sometimes couples will ask a close friend to be the soloist, in which case it will be necessary for this person to practise during the rehearsals in order to make him/herself familiar with the facility's acoustics and the style of any accompanist.

The Recessional

When the couple are officially married and pronounced husband and wife, the music should change to a more festive and celebratory style. Recessional music will occur as the wedding party leaves the ceremony venue and it will set the tone for the celebrations that are to follow. Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*, Mendelssohn's *Wedding March*, or Handel's *Water Music* are popular choices. For more contemporary music, couples could choose any type of music they like. Popular choices include artists such as Shania Twain, U2, Stevie Wonder, Garth Brooks, Destiny's Child, and Adele. Whatever the choice, the music should be something that is meaningful and joyful for the couple.

More creative sounds to highlight the wedding party's departure should be considered for the recessional. Couples might decide to use a bell choir or a bagpiper to play at the church door, for example. If the ceremony is held at a hotel, a marching band or a bluegrass band might be considered. There are many options for the recessional music but the most important thing is to make sure it is uplifting, celebratory and, of course, personalised.

Postlude

Ceremonies only conclude when the last guest leaves. Planning the music for the postlude, continuous music which is played as the guests leave the ceremony site, is important, especially if there are a lot of people. Allow for around ten minutes of postlude music. This will enable the guests to exit the site smartly and quickly to the sound of upbeat music rather than the sound of shuffling feet. Sometimes, the ceremony and the reception will be held at the same venue, in which case the music is especially important as there is no real change of scenery from one part of the wedding to the next. The music must indicate the transition from ceremony to reception. Music helps to encourage movement; therefore, choose it wisely.

Table 6.5

Examples of Cocktail Hour Music
• The Beatles • Michael Bublé • Louis Armstrong • Mariah Carey • Jim Brickman • Ray Charles • Harry Connick, Jr. • Patsy Cline • Norah Jones • Vince Gill • Michael McDonald • Yo-Yo Ma • Sarah McLachlan • Tim McGraw • Rod Stewart • Van Morrison • George Winston • Vivaldi

Cocktail Hour Music and Entertainment

Cocktail hour music is best kept light and breezy to ensure that it doesn’t interfere with conversation. During wedding ceremonies there are often limited opportunities for guests to converse; therefore, the cocktail hour becomes a perfect place to chat and mingle. The reception will get off on the right foot during cocktail hour if the music is carefully chosen and kept light, such as big band or light jazz music. Table 6.5 above provides a list of artists whose music is perfect for cocktail hour.

If you have the good fortune to have a piano at the reception site, you might hire a pianist for the cocktail hour. Ensure the piano has been tuned and is in good working condition before the actual day. If there is no piano (or your clients don’t want this option) you might like to think about a violin and flute duo, a jazz trio, or a guitarist. When searching for the musical talent to play on the day, check out local music schools for up-and-coming talent. This will save some money as well. You might also ask the reception managers at the venue. They are often excellent sources for locating specific types of musicians such as salsa bands or German polka bands, for example.

When you are giving your clients advice on music options for the cocktail hour or the reception, make sure you keep in mind the space limitations at the venue. A single acoustic guitar will be lost in a larger space, while too many musicians in a smaller place will overwhelm the guests. You must find out about any noise restrictions governing the venue or the surrounding area. Amplified music is often not allowed

in residential areas. Limits on musician numbers may also apply. If a venue is in a quieter neighbourhood you may be looking at an 11pm finish, or even earlier. Check any specifications with the venue and make sure you discuss them with your clients. The music contract should contain these restrictions as well.

Reception Music and Entertainment

When the cocktail hour is over and the guests are ushered to their seats in order for the reception to begin, the entertainment and music will take a new direction. For the actual dinner, the music will probably be similar to that played during the cocktail hour to allow conversation. After dinner, specific moments should be highlighted through dancing and music. These will include the couple’s first dance together as husband and wife, the father/bride and mother/groom dance, the cake-cutting ceremony, the garter and bouquet toss, music for the couple’s departure, and the last dance of the evening. In between these moments the reception is usually devoted to celebration and dancing.

The use of live music is a matter for each couple to decide. They may ask you for your advice on whether to hire a live band or a DJ. You must be able to present both sides objectively and allow the couple to consider them. Table 6.6 below provides a list of pros and cons of live and recorded music. You, as the consultant, must also keep up to date on the latest artists and music. If clients are seeking a specific sound, you must know what it is and advise them accordingly.

Table 6.6

Pros and Cons of Live versus Pre-recorded Music
Pre-recorded Music (DJ): Pros • Cheaper than a live band • If space is tight, a DJ takes up almost no room • Immediate access to a wide variety of music • Can play the latest, contemporary music that ‘cover’ bands may not play • Short breaks or none at all • Because a DJ is just one person, there is less that can go wrong • Can also act as emcee • Can take the pulse of the room and adjust music selections to keep the party going • Set-up time and special equipment are minimal Pre-recorded Music (DJ): Cons • Pre-recorded music cannot always be easily adjusted to fit the timing of a moment • Personality may be abrasive or inappropriate • Typically seen as less sophisticated than a live band Live Music (Band): Pros

- There is great variety in bands in terms of size and style
- Live performances motivate guests to dance
- Can readily adjust tone and speed of music
- Lead singer can act as emcee
- Can establish a time period through dress, style and equipment (e.g., Big Band)
- An excellent band is a memorable part of the wedding

Live Music (Band): Cons

- Usually more expensive than a DJ
- More complex contracts and personalities
- More mouths to feed
- More that can go wrong with equipment
- Their repertoire will be more restricted than that of a DJ
- Set-up time and equipment may be extensive
- Will require breaks; movement to recorded music during breaks will change

Tone

A good way to remain up to date with all the latest music and artists is to follow who is top of the charts. Websites such as Billboard.com continually update listings. These listings also include biographies of the talent, and this will help you to learn more about them and determine whether the music/artists' work will be a good fit for your clients.

Other Reception Entertainment

Other entertainment for the reception is usually accompanied by music. Apart from music, the other most common form of entertainment is dance, and certain dances are expected at certain moments of weddings.

When thinking about these dances, keep in mind the comfort of the couple. For example, Lababidi (2004) explains people's love/hate relationship with belly-dancing at Egyptian weddings. Some Egyptians are deeply conflicted about the respectability of this art form...The fact that weddings are hardly complete without a belly-dancer is revealing, given the function of marriage as sanctifying the union between a man and a woman who is supposed to be a virgin. . . . The bride might worry: How can I possibly compete with this woman invulnerable to taboo? Having spent a lifetime shrewdly protecting her virtue and a small fortune on the appearance of her dress, she is being upstaged at her own wedding by a woman who seems to care for neither. The garter toss, common in American culture, can also push the limits of decorum, and many couples forego this tradition. Other dances are controversial for completely different reasons. The decision on whether to have a money dance, for example, can be a source of significant conflict for a couple raised with different cultural traditions. One person might see it as an anticipated and enjoyable way of dancing with an abundance of guests in a short period of time,

whereas the other may view it as greedy and tacky. Decisions on whether to incorporate specific dances or other forms of entertainment should be made at least a month before the wedding, as differences in opinion regarding related traditions can cause the couple stress.

Tips for Entertainment Hire

It doesn't matter whether your clients decide to hire a string quartet, a soloist, a DJ, a live band, or all of these - it is your communication with the entertainment that will be a major key to the success of the wedding day. You are responsible for ensuring that the entertainment turns up, but this is only a small part of it. You must make sure your clients prepare a list of songs/music they want played, as well as any music/songs they don't want. This is very important for the reception in particular. If the couple choose to have a 'Macarena-free' reception, this has to be stipulated in writing and it must be presented to the entertainers' representative in advance. The entertainers will also need a list of the wedding party members if they are to make any introductions. The contract should contain any other special instructions and you should highlight these special requests just before the wedding day. For example, you might stipulate "no garter toss" or "announce the cake cutting at 9:00 PM." When you are looking to hire the entertainment you'll find that prices can often be negotiated depending on the time of year or time of the week and even the time of day that their services will be required. Below is a list of five secrets to hiring entertainment at the best prices, as explained by David Fletcher of Washington's Best Musicians (2006):

1. **Negotiate** – Often, it's better to state in advance how much you can afford to pay instead of asking the entertainers how much they will charge. However, you must also appreciate that these people are artists; try not to offend him/her/them with an offer deemed unreasonable.
2. **Consider the "proximity to the event" discount** - If clients are willing to wait until two or three weeks before their wedding day, they may be rewarded by having to pay less for the musical talent that is not yet booked. This is a tactic often used in the corporate planning world; however, it will probably be more difficult to convince a stressed-out couple that there are merits to waiting.
3. **Check who is already at the venue** - If the event is to be held in the evening, check whether there is a DJ or band already playing earlier in the day. You could save quite a lot by hiring them for the rest of the evening.
4. **Remove the liaison** - Speak directly to the person who will provide the service. An abundance of information is available online where you will be able to find the immediate point of contact for a specific talent.
5. **Make personal contact** - You should make yourself familiar with the best bands and DJs in your area. Learn the names of the key personnel and make sure you remember them.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Music and Entertainment Options

- Understand that every stage of the wedding day will require music: the ceremony, the cocktail hour, and the reception.
- Remember that there are five main parts to a wedding ceremony: the prelude, the processional, the ceremony, the recessional, and the postlude.
- Ensure that the music chosen is consistent with the overall tone of the wedding.
- The prelude music should last for around 30 to 45 minutes.
- For the processional, consider the length of the aisle and the number of members in the wedding party before deciding on the music.
- Make sure there is a music change or a dramatic pause before the bride's entrance.
- During the ceremony, highlight any special moments with the use of interlude music or vocal performances.
- In houses of worship, obtain approval for any secular music choices.
- Discuss both the pros and the cons of live versus pre-recorded music with your clients.
- Become familiar with any restrictions imposed by the reception venue.
- Always come prepared with a boom box and a CD of ceremony and reception music in case the entertainment somehow fails to arrive.

Stationery

The invitations to a wedding are usually issued by the bride and groom's parents, the couple themselves, or whoever is hosting the event. One family will usually receive one invitation unless there has been a family divorce beforehand.

Wedding invitations are sent out around two to three months before the wedding. This gives guests enough time to RSVP and arrange transport or accommodation if required. This will also give you enough time to organise other aspects of the wedding, ones which are governed by guest numbers. An example of this would be the cake size, the number of bomboniere, and numbers for the reception venue.

Stationery Elements and Etiquette

Stationery elements play an on-going role throughout a wedding process. They also bookend weddings as they are usually the first things that guests will see, i.e. save-the-date cards and/or invitations. Finally, there will be thank-you cards sent out after the event.

You must remember that 'stationery' is spelt with an 'ery' not 'ary.' The word is often misspelt. In this section we will look at the different purposes of stationery, including some common etiquette rules. The stationery accounts for only around 3% of the budget but the range of stationery is very broad and includes save-the-date cards, invitations, calligraphy, ceremony programs, seating stationery, menus, any personalised paper products, wedding announcements, and thank-you cards.

Save-the-Date Notices

These notices or cards will usually be sent out around 6-18 months before a wedding and have become quite popular over the past few years. They can be used for all weddings but are especially important for destination weddings or weddings which will occur over a holiday weekend. Refrigerator magnets are very popular. These notices or cards (or magnets) are a constant reminder of the event and the date, the location and, of course, the names of the couple. Most often, the words “invitation to follow” will appear on the notices, indicating that this is not the actual invitation. These save-the-date cards are fun and usually informal but they should still be chosen to fit in with the wedding theme.

Make sure your clients know that all potential guests should receive a save-the-date card/notice. In some cases, to save a little money, the couple might decide to send them only to out-of-town guests, but they should remember that all the guests will be busy and will need the information. They must also remember that most of the time people in these groups know one another and if one doesn't receive an invitation and another guest does, he/she may think that they aren't invited to the wedding. For these reasons it is advisable to be consistent.

Invitations

Many decisions are involved when it comes to invitations. Clients must decide (with your assistance if need be) on the printing style, the paper, fonts, wording, ordering and delivery. Decisions made about invitations are usually carried over to many other stationery elements as well.

Parts of the Invitation

Very formal invitations include the following: an outer envelope, an inner envelope, an invitation card, a reception card, and a response card. Sometimes invitations include more information, such as directions cards or cards with lodging options (if the wedding is to be out of town). Lynne Sandler, from the company 'Lettering by Lynne', explains that dual envelopes originate from a time when the delivery of mail was done by horse and carriage. Muddy and unpaved roads would often leave the outer envelope stained; therefore, upon arrival it would be discarded to reveal another clean envelope containing the invitation. Today, outer and inner envelopes are used for different wording purposes, and this will be discussed later in the wording section. Outer envelopes are gummed for sealing purposes but inner envelopes are never sealed.

An invitation card provides specifics on the event. Reception cards are required if the ceremony and reception are to be held in different places. If they are both at the same venue/location, the words “Reception to follow” will usually be included on the actual invitation. A response card, which is also referred to as a reply card, was not traditionally included. Instead, recipients of invitations would write formal letters of acceptance. Response cards were introduced as time-saving devices for our more hectic pace of life. Some response cards may include an entrée option listing to enable individual guests to choose their reception meals. Response cards should include stamped addressed envelopes for return purposes.

In some cases, clients may ask you whether it would be appropriate to include registry cards in the invitations. These cards offer details of the stores where the bride and groom have registered for gifts. This has become more commonplace; however, in terms of etiquette it is quite inappropriate to include such details in wedding invitations as it implies that guests are required to buy a gift. Moreover, these gifts must be bought from a certain place. Guests should not be made to feel that their buying options are limited, especially from a predetermined listing. If guests wish to choose something from the registry for the couple, they can easily request the store information by e-mail or word of mouth.

Printing Style

There are four main printing styles used for wedding invitations: engraved, letterpress, flat, and thermography. Engraving is the traditional printing style and is very formal as well as expensive. Many brides who request this printing style are advised to do so by their mothers/mothers-in-law, who remember this classic style. Engraved invitations have a certain sensory feel. If you run your hand over the words you'll feel a slightly raised texture, and if you turn the invitation over you will see an impression. Metal plates bearing the exact wording required by the couple will be made specifically for each individual invitation. This is one of the reasons why engraving is more expensive.

Letterpress is another traditionally popular style. This involves a process which is the opposite of engraving; i.e. the letters are raised and then pressed into soft paper, leaving an indent. If you run your hand over it, you will feel the ridges. Letterpress is very classy and also very expensive, partly because very few companies still offer this style.

Flat printing is not very expensive and is selected when a couple decide to include design elements which don't lend themselves to the raised style. Contemporary invitations containing photos, large images or graphic designs are not really suited to raised printing. These invitations might include embossed images, which are raised images that don't include ink and are used for thematic images, or monograms such as cultural symbols, shells, flowers, snowflakes or leaves. These images can also be printed using the above-mentioned styles.

Thermography is also inexpensive and is the most popular printing style. Like engraving, it involves raised printing which you can feel. If the invitation is turned over you will see no impression. Regular printing presses are used for these invitations; hence, the printing process is very fast. When the ink is still wet, it is sprayed with a powder before heat is applied, causing a chemical reaction between the ink and the powder.

Invitation Paper

The paper chosen will partly be determined by the printing style but it is really a matter of personal choice as well as budget. Invitation costs are determined by printing costs *and* paper quality. If the paper is linen rag or 100% cotton, it will be a lot more expensive than say, a synthetic paper blend. The bond weight of paper also shows its quality – 32 or 40 pound paper is good letter quality. Just as a point of comparison, computer paper is 20 pound. Significant costs will be incurred if the couple desire

handmade paper or other features such as gold leaf edging, ribbons, dried flowers, envelope liners, or vellum overlays.

Colour is something else to consider when choosing the paper. In the U.S. ecru is a very traditional choice. In Europe, white is the most popular choice. A full spectrum of colours is readily available for contemporary invitations and this makes it easier for couples to match their invitations to their wedding tone.

Font

The font range has increased significantly. The choice of font, be it contemporary or classic, will depend on the style of the actual invitation.

Options to consider include:

1. printed style or cursive;
2. all upper-case letters or a mixture of upper-case and lower-case letters;
3. the inclusion of monograms or other large specialty fonts; and
4. the ink colour.

Traditionally, the font ink colour is black but different coloured inks have now become more common. As an example, an autumn wedding might include an olive green or rust-coloured ink on the invitation along with a leaf motif.

Wording

The wording will start with the envelopes. The most formal is the outer envelope and includes titles and full names. The addresses should not include any abbreviations for the street or the state/borough/county. For example, use 'Street' and not 'St'. Outer envelopes must be addressed to the primary recipient(s) while the inner ones might include additional invitees and can use formal or informal names. For example, the outer envelope will be addressed to Mr. Gregory Aabas, while the inner envelope might be addressed to 'Greg and guest'. Alternatively, the outer envelope will bear the name Doctor Linda Tigh, while the inner envelope will refer to Lynne, Rob, Cindy and Joey, to include the names of the guests' children. Very formal invitations will use the full names and titles on both the outer and inner envelopes.

Invitation wording can sometimes become complicated when considering changing family dynamics. Geller (1999) states that traditional wedding invitations, which mostly suggest a patriarchal society and uniformity, are challenged in today's world where egalitarianism and individualism are more widespread. Many people are divorced, many are in second marriages, many have blended families, and there are also many cross-cultural unions. For example, a bride might have two sets of parents (or maybe even three) so it will not be feasible to include all their names on the invitation. Generally speaking, there are six elements in the wording of invitations with associated lines: host, request, bride and groom, date and time, location, and any special instructions (Stewart, 1999).

The response card wording must mirror the formality of the invitation wording. There are three elements in most response cards: space for guest name(s), indication of attendance, and the date by which a response is desired. If guests are to be given the option of choosing their entrees or if any other decisions are to be made, information on their selection options must also be included.

Below are three examples of how invitations might be worded, as well as a response card that mirrors the tone of the invitation. The most formal and traditional will be those where the parents act as hosts. The R.S.V.P. in the request line indicates that guests should send a personal reply. In those cases no response card is necessary. Open response cards can also be used for weddings that are less formal. They allow the guests to write their own notes which the couple usually save in a memory album.

The reception card wording is very straightforward. It will include the time and location of the reception. If many out-of-town guests will be attending, a directions card should be included as well. If the ceremony or reception is to be child-free, this information should be made clear on reception cards. Couples who feel very strongly about having a child-free wedding should indicate this information in a few different places. Make sure there is no ambiguity regarding the cut-off age. Some couples prefer to have no children under five years of age in attendance; others prefer no children under 18. Email communications or word of mouth are often used to clear up any questions or uncertainties.

Ordering Invitations

You should advise clients to begin working with their stationery specialists around four to six months before their wedding. Stationery companies are able to work within a shorter time-frame, but more creative options will need more time; therefore don't leave it until closer to the wedding date. Proofing will also need to be carried out and some invitations will need multiple proofs before the desired look is achieved. Make sure your clients are aware that once they have accepted the proof, they take full responsibility for all the spelling, information, print style, punctuation, font, layout and colour for the invitations.

Couples should count invitation numbers based on households rather than individuals. A common error is to order invitations based on guest numbers, but if 100 people are to be invited it is unlikely that 100 invitations will be needed. The likely number would be between 50 and 75, depending on how many singles, couples and children are being invited. Make sure clients do not underestimate the number of invitations needed because it will cost them much more to re-order invitations than to have a few extra ones printed. When a stationery company gets the original order off the press, that order is finished. If more copies are required, it will be considered a completely new job. Tell clients that the first 25 stationery items are the most expensive and that prices decrease thereafter. Many high-end companies do not accept orders of less than 50. For example, if a couple were to order some high-quality invitations, the cost would probably be around £10 each but this would drop to £8 each were they to order 100 of the same design. The same applies to less-expensive invitations, with their price also dropping from around £5 to £3 for orders of 100 or more.

Delivery

Advise clients to weigh the invitations for postage purposes. In many cases the invitations will weigh more than an ounce when all the inserts are included. You do not want an invitation to arrive with postage due. Even in cases where the invitations weigh less than one ounce, it will be necessary to add additional postage costs for bulky envelopes or oddly-shaped ones. Square invitations, for example, will require additional postage. Clients should also be advised to have their invitations hand-cancelled as many inserts can cause bulkiness and might be mangled when they go through postage metres. Hand cancellation gives invitations a more elegant look. It's always a good idea to get clients to mail invitations to themselves first as a test run before mailing all of them. This will give your clients an idea of how long it will take for an invitation to arrive and to note what kind of shape it arrives in when it is delivered.

Specific stamps can also be found at post offices; some are floral and others are referred to as 'Love' stamps. These choices tend to be quite popular for wedding invitations. Couples might choose to order custom-designed stamps through websites such as PhotoStamps.com. The stamps might feature a couple's engagement photo or another image that will tie in with the wedding theme. If a couple are planning a beach-themed wedding, the stamp might be a photo of sea shells, palm trees or a seashore.

You should also consider to whom the response cards will be returned. Traditionally, this would have been the bride's parents but today it will be whoever the couple decides upon – usually the bride herself. Guests today might also respond through '1800' numbers which are managed by companies that track RSVPs, or through specific website addresses. Sometimes couples decide to send out "A" list wedding guests ten weeks prior to the wedding and then "B" list guests based on rejections from the "A" list. Be aware, however, that tiered guest lists will probably have some significant implications in terms of etiquette. Members of peer groups usually talk to one another, and people discover rather quickly whether they are in the top group or not. This can and does lead to hurt feelings or even some conflict.

Calligraphy

An excellent way of creating personal and elegant stationery elements is through calligraphers' hand printing. Some guests have fond memories of invitations they received that were lettered by calligraphers. Calligraphers are usually asked to address envelopes, but they can also be hired to letter any stationery elements. If a calligrapher is hired to letter invitations, the menus, or any other items used for the guests, he/she will hand-design a template which will be typeset and then printed.

Envelopes are unique to each guest, and the required time investment and the cost are quite significant. Charges for each set of outer and inner envelopes range from £5 to £7. This lovely touch is often reserved for weddings with higher budgets.

Sometimes, due to the cost, couples will explore other options for addressing their envelopes. A more personal approach is to write them by hand. Some couples will hold gatherings with family or friends who have elegant handwriting and ask them to help with addressing the invitations. As per etiquette, black ink must be used when envelopes are addressed by hand. Make sure your clients order enough

extra envelopes if they hand-address their envelopes as there will, of course, be errors. Hand-addressing invitations takes a lot of time and today many couples use computers. Stationery vendors can help with this, and there are now calligraphy fonts almost as beautiful as the hand-crafted ones. Avoid using labels. Make sure the addresses are printed directly onto the envelopes.

Ceremony Programs

Most couples will use programs to help guide their guests through the ceremony. These programs are designed and printed by couples themselves in order to save on costs, and they will take many different shapes and sizes. Programs introduce guests to the wedding party as well as the setting forth of the ceremony organisation. Ceremonies held in houses of worship will sometimes be subject to restrictions in terms of the program wording. All wedding party members are usually listed along with information on the readings, responses, prayers, music and the vows. Any special elements in the ceremony can also be written into the program. If a couple decide to jump the broom, an African American tradition, for example, they might choose to include a brief note on this tradition's history. Messages of thanks or dedications are also included. All programs and descriptions should be kept short. Guests do not want to be reading a dissertation on the day and too much reading will take guests' attention away from the actual ceremony. For cross-cultural weddings and weddings where guests speak different languages, it is thoughtful to print the program in both languages side by side. For weddings that are more casual, wedding party members' personalities can be shared on the program.

The program is usually designed later in the planning process as ceremonies are finalised just a few weeks ahead of a wedding. If clients choose to create their program themselves, they should be advised not to wait until the last minute and find themselves tying ribbons or raffia onto the programs on the eve of the wedding. Stationery is also required for other specialised elements of the ceremony. Pew cards, for example, might be used to reserve special seats for any honoured guests, or for a large immediate family who will require more than the first two rows. Often, stationers can design personalised Ketuvah, Jewish marriage contracts. Most couples who decide to write their own vows choose to have them printed and framed. Lastly, guest books are usually specially designed. They are used for both the ceremony and the reception, or one of the two.

Seating Stationery

Seating stationery is useful when couples wish to designate where their guests will be seated at their reception. For example, suppose that the cocktail hour ends at 6:45 PM and the dinner is to be served at 7:00 PM. This leaves only 15 minutes in which to move (often) large numbers of people into a dining area. This is where seating stationery can be particularly helpful. It might include a seating chart, escort cards and place cards, and also table markers. The seating chart will show a guest list in alphabetical order. Each name will be accompanied by the table number where the guest will be seated. A seating chart is quite large and is usually mounted in a rented frame or on a foam board. It could cause congestion in the case of a wedding with more than one hundred guests.

Another seating option is to use photograph escort cards. They also list the guests' names and their table numbers but on individual cards. A table marker on each table will tell guests that they're at the right table. If number options are chosen they might be in the form of *Table 1* or *#1*. Advise clients to avoid

Roman numerals because in a large ballroom the numbers can look similar and cause confusion for the guests and the staff. Table markers should be kept simple and the fonts large and in bold to make them easier to see. These table markers are usually put in frames or stands rented from stationery vendors, catering companies, or even the floral designer if you choose to have them incorporated into centrepieces.

Place cards should be used if guests also have a designated seat as well as a designated table. With this amount of detail it will be necessary to allow enough time for the site layout work. Seating stationery also allows for design touches which tie in with the wedding theme. For example, a wedding with a winter theme might have a snowflake embossed on the escort cards, or a Parisian wedding theme might use a famous Parisian landmark to designate tables. Couples who like hiking, as another example, might use the names of different mountains, rivers and lakes on each individual table.

Menus

For weddings with formal receptions, menu cards are usually included to display the names of the dishes to be served. They might also indicate the primary ingredients. A menu will heighten the guests' expectations, create a sense of culinary expectation, or promote some cultural understanding.

With regard to the design of the menus, they usually bear a monogram of the couple and might also include some creative terminology. Instead of using the words 'First Course', for example, the first meal stage could be referred to as 'Romance' or some other term connected to the couple's theme. A good caterer will work with the couple to create specialty entrees with some inventive names, similar to creating a signature drink. The menu cards might be printed on fine parchment paper which is rolled and tied up, or on cardstock, and then tucked into the napkins, leaned against water glasses, or perhaps placed on a charger plate.

Wedding themes can be developed further with the use of such things as personalised napkins, matches, or boxes. Napkins are most commonly chosen for this purpose and come in a large variety of styles and colours, usually with the couple's names or a monogram. They will usually be placed in the bar area or on the cake table.

Personalised boxes and bags can be purchased to use with favours. They will usually be filled with chocolates, mints, or other types of treats. Matches used to be quite popular in the past but have lost their popularity nowadays, mostly because reception halls have banned smoking. If the favour is a candle, however, personalised matches add a lovely touch.

Wedding Announcements

Small weddings are chosen by couples for personal reasons, because of budget constraints, or perhaps because they have chosen a destination wedding and many guests cannot attend. In these cases, wedding announcements are courtesy notices sent to people not invited to let them know that the wedding has taken place. These announcements will state the bride and groom's names, the wedding date, and also the location where it was held. These announcements are not sent to people who were

present at the wedding as this would be redundant. They should be mailed within a week after the wedding has taken place, and certainly never before the wedding.

Thank-You Notes

Thank-you cards are like a social type of stationery and are often referred to as informals. They can match the invitations or they might be more generic, which would also allow them to be utilised for other purposes. As has already been mentioned, smaller stationery orders will cost more than larger ones. Informals will often include the couple's monogram. If the bride isn't taking her husband's name, her full name or initials will appear on the left followed by a large ampersand and the groom's full name or initial. Sometimes couples choose to include a photo of themselves in the thank-you cards. The cards can be the same for every guest or they might be more personalised.

It is best not to use reprinted or generic thank-you cards. Each one should be specific to the gift and the guest. In larger weddings, the consultants often help with documenting gifts and writing the thank-you cards to ensure that all the information is correct and the cards are sent out in a timely fashion.

Etiquette dictates that informals must be sent out within a month of the wedding day. Late thank-you cards are better than none, however. Shower and wedding gifts from the same person (or people) should be acknowledged with the use of different thank-you cards/notes. Be aware that monogrammed informals with a changed surname should never be sent until after a wedding.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Stationery Elements

- Remember the spelling - stationery ends with "ery."
- The printing style and the paper quality will dictate the stationery cost.
- Stationery elements' wording is etiquette-driven, but clients are still able to select wording that fits their personalities.
- Remind couples who do not want children at their ceremonies or receptions to make this very clear on their invitations and the response cards.
- When ordering the invitations, base the number on households instead of the number of individuals invited.
- Order enough invitations to make sure there will be no need for a re-order.
- When mailing invitations, remember there will be increased postage for bulky or square-shaped envelopes.

Transport and Wedding Cars

Arriving in style is really the only way for the modern-day bride to arrive on her wedding day. The atmosphere created when the bride arrives for the ceremony is unique and the highlight of most weddings. There is great anticipation and everyone eagerly awaits the first glimpse of the bride as she steps out of the wedding car (or other transportation).

Choosing the Wedding Vehicles

Wedding vehicles are not always viewed as a top priority when compared to other elements of a wedding. This may be the case; however, it is necessary to consider the options to avoid disappointment later on. Transport companies can sometimes be fully booked for up to twelve months or more. Make sure you leave enough time to consider wedding transport options and to make a booking.

There may be many options to choose from with regard to wedding transportation, including classic vintage cars, horse-drawn carriages, stretch limousines, and wedding 'trikes.'

When choosing the type of transportation, consider the overall wedding formality and style. For more traditional or formal weddings, horse-drawn carriages or classic vintage cars are a good choice. For more contemporary-styled weddings, stylish limos or sporty convertibles would be suitable.

Vehicle Inspection

When you have narrowed down your search to a few potential companies, it is time to phone them and arrange an appointment to inspect their vehicles and meet the staff. Choose three or four companies if possible and then make your final choice. Do not book anything unless you have personally inspected the vehicles first. Photographs in magazines or on the Internet may look impressive but looks can sometimes be deceptive. Don't rush through the inspection of a vehicle; take your time. Consider the vehicle size, its cleanliness, the inside and outside condition, interior comforts, and repair and maintenance of the vehicle, and check for scratches, rust or damage. Also check that vehicles are heated and air-conditioned. Another thing to inspect is the staff attire or uniforms that may be worn on the wedding day. If your clients want a horse-drawn carriage, make sure you check the horses as well to ensure they are healthy and quiet in nature.

During your meeting to inspect the vehicles, ask whether the company has any videos or albums of their vehicles and staff in action. Ask a lot of questions and then decide which company best appeals to the client's transport needs and personal styles. Check that the company is licensed.

Questions to Ask

Here are some questions that you might ask each company before meeting with them.

- Do you have recent examples of weddings you have attended? This will usually be in the form of videos or display albums.
- Are the vehicles that we will actually inspect and the staff we'll meet with (at our appointment) the ones that will be present on the wedding day?
- How many people do the vehicles seat?
- How many staff / chauffeurs are provided with the vehicle?
- Do the chauffeurs carry umbrellas and assist the bride in and out of the vehicle?
- Are the vehicles used for other weddings on the same day, or only for one wedding per day?
- Are any food and beverages provided in the vehicle?
- Is your company licensed to operate as a wedding car hire company?
- What wedding packages do you provide and what do they include?

- Are there any special offers available with the venue's wedding packages (reduced price for off-peak, winter or Sunday weddings etc.)?
- For how long is the vehicle hire?
- Are the vehicles air-conditioned and heated?
- What happens in the event of a vehicle breaking down? Are 'back-up' vehicles always available?
- Are there any extra costs associated with the hire of the vehicle?
- When are deposits, instalments and final payments due? How much will they be?
- Are there any cancellation fees?

Other Considerations

In addition to the above questions, you might like to consider the following:

- Are the car-hire company's costs within your client's budget?
- Are the vehicles in keeping with the theme and the style of the wedding?
- Are the vehicles available on the date of the wedding?
- Are their chauffeurs familiar with the locations of the ceremony and reception areas?
- Do the chauffeurs carry mobile phones, in the event of an emergency? This really is essential.
- If a contract has been signed, ensure that you have a copy, that you've read it and that you understand what you are signing.
- Quality over price is usually the best advice to follow.

You may feel that co-ordinating transportation logistics is like being a glorified dispatcher, but ensuring that everyone turns up on time and the guests get home in a timely fashion is actually one of the most important details. Guests might not remember perfect transportation, but they are sure to recall a wedding where they had to wait in the freezing cold because transportation was not well organised.

Arranging transportation for a client's wedding involves five main things:

1. getting started;
2. transportation to the ceremony venue;
3. transportation from the ceremony venue to the reception (if in a different location);
4. transportation from the reception to the final destination; and
5. transportation costs and any final details.

Getting Started

When discussing clients' transportation needs, the first task is to work out with them how many people will need transport at different times throughout the wedding festivities. A clear understanding is needed of all transport requirements, ranging from picking up guests at an airport to organising a vintage Rolls-Royce for the trip home after the couple's honeymoon.

Make sure you have a prepared list of questions for your clients in order that you might form a clear understanding of their transport needs. Remember, each couple and wedding will be different; therefore, listen carefully. The questions you should ask will concern who, what, where and when.

- Ask what style (or styles) of vehicles the couple want for their special day. Do they have an interest in a stretch limo and, if so, what colour? Do they prefer a Hummer, SUV, a vintage car, or a Lincoln town car? Bear in mind the couple's budget when discussing their transportation needs.
- Ask who needs to be transported. Make sure the clients write down exactly who needs to be moved from A to B. Ask the clients to prepare a list of the wedding party names and any guests who will need transportation and from which location to they need to be moved. Make sure you ask about people's needs, such as a grandmother who is in a wheelchair, as this will influence the transport type that should be sent to pick her up.
- Find out exactly when people will need to be transported. When dealing with a destination wedding, transportation needs can be extensive and could get out of control unless they are very well co-ordinated. Double- and triple-check flight schedules (and again a few hours before flights are due to land) to determine the arrival and the departure times. This will enable you to minimise the trips to the airport. It's advisable to have a separate timeline specifically for transportation.

Transportation to the Ceremony

Once you have determined exactly how many people will need transportation, work out how to transport the bride and bridesmaids to the ceremony site. Brides need transportation from the location where they are dressing to the ceremony site. The bride will take this final ride as a single woman, usually accompanied by her mother, father or bridesmaids. As it's usually a bride's father who will escort her down the aisle, make sure you keep them together prior to the ceremony.

If just the bride and her father are travelling together, their means of transport might be a horse and carriage, a classic car, or another intimate type of vehicle. If, for example, the wedding is to take place on a family farm, the transport choice might be a hot air balloon, or perhaps an old truck (upgraded). The main thing is to match the vehicles to the wedding theme.

A bride may choose to meet her father (or whoever is giving her away) at the ceremony site and ride only with her attendants. A comfortable vehicle will be needed to transport all the women. Note that a stretch limo can hold 10-12 people and a regular limo 6 to 10 people comfortably. If considering a town car, note that it can hold 2-4 passengers. Make a head count and then decide what type of vehicle will suit the wedding party size.

Once you have planned the bride's transport, work out how to get the groom to the ceremony. Perhaps another limo might pick him and his family up from their home or hotel (wherever they are staying). Perhaps the groom will decide to ride with the groomsmen in a stretch Hummer to arrive at the ceremony. Whatever the groom plans, ensure that you are well aware of all the arrangements and have contact phone numbers. You will need to be aware of the exact location of the groom throughout the wedding day.

The next step will be to work out the transportation for the bridal party, the family, and special guests. You must stay with the theme of the wedding. Make sure transportation for the big day is secured well in advance, especially if the wedding date falls on or close to a graduation season or other big holiday. It may be advisable (if budget permits) to hire a bus or shuttle to transport guests to the wedding location

and back to their lodgings at the end of the day. This will ensure the guests' safety and cut down on late arrivals. A coach can seat up to 50 people while executive coaches can take 20 passengers. The couple might like to hire a fleet of vehicles for the day. If the guests are likely to spend quite a lot of time in the vehicles, you might arrange for a tour guide or local expert to entertain them with stories along the way.

If your clients decide to provide guest transportation, this must be communicated to people well in advance to enable them to take advantage of it. They might send out a mailing with all their invitations or only to confirmed guests. The information should explain where guests might find the transportation vehicles and when they will be departing for the ceremony. We suggest you prolong the actual time available by about 15 minutes to accommodate any stragglers.

Transportation from the Ceremony to the Reception

Once the couple are been officially married, there will probably be excited guests anxious to move to the reception. In order to facilitate this movement it makes sense to transport people en masse, in particular when the reception venue is in a major city. The most economical option is to use the same transport that brought the guests to the ceremony site. If most of the guests are likely to drive their own cars to the reception, it may be worth hiring a valet service to assist with parking. Most valets will charge around £15 to £25 per attendant per hour, plus gratuities. A valet service will save guests the time, aggravation and expense of searching for parking in a busy downtown area.

You should allow for about five or six attendants per 100 guests. Consider also the end of the evening when more staff will be needed to ensure that all guests are reunited their cars quickly. Guests should not be left waiting for more than five or ten minutes.

Your clients might also want to consider pre-paying parking fees if there is to be a charge at the ceremony/reception venue. You could negotiate the fee and have it built into the venue contract. If the clients estimate 200 guests, for example, you could probably count on around 100 cars. If the reception is at a hotel and it charges a flat fee of £15 per car, the clients will pay £1,500 to enable their guests to park free of charge. In such a case, make sure the arrangements are communicated to the guests to avoid them accidentally paying for their parking.

Once the couple are married, it is certain they will want to leave the reception area in style. The vehicle chosen will also be determined by the distance of the reception venue from the ceremony venue. If it is only a few blocks away, perhaps a horse and carriage would add the right touch. If the reception is further away, it would be better for the couple to be as cosy and comfortable as possible; hence, a vintage car might be the best option. No matter what type of transportation the couple chooses, ensure all the details are in writing, including arrival time which should be padded by 15 minutes, reception departure time, the addresses of all the locations, and the model, colour and size of the vehicle. If the clients want the driver to take the scenic route, this information should also be included. Make sure you are very specific and become familiar with each vehicle and its limitations. For example, if the wedding is held in a city which usually receives a lot of rain and your clients decide upon a horse-drawn carriage, make sure it is a covered one.

When the reception is winding down and the last dance has finished, the couple, their wedding party and guests will need to leave the reception area and head off to their own destinations. It is important to discuss exactly how the couple want to make their exit. Do they want to make a run through an arch with sparklers and into a waiting limousine, or do they prefer to steal away? In the Table below is a list of creative transportation modes that couples might use to make a memorable exit or for any other point in the big day.

You must ferry the wedding party and guests back to where they started earlier in the day to enable them to pick up their own cars or return safely to their hotels. Leaving guests without transport is very inconsiderate. You, as the wedding consultant, must encourage your clients to consider their obligations as hosts.

Creative Modes of Transportation

• Antique fire engine	• Ice cream truck
• All-terrain vehicles	• Mini Cooper
• Bicycle built for two	• Monster truck
• Canoe	• Moped
• Camel	• Motorcycle with sidecar
• Chinese rickshaw	• Sailboat
• Cross-country skis	• Sleigh
• Dog sled	• Snowboard
• Duck boat	• Snowmobile
• Golf cart	• Subway
• Horseback	• Vintage VW Beetle

Vehicle Table

Sample Fee Structure for Common Forms of Wedding Transportation

Vehicle Type	Hourly Rate	Minimum Rental Time	Total Cost
Sedan: 4 passengers	£68/hour	3 HR	£204
SUV: 5 passengers	£78/hour	3 HR	£234
Limo: 6 passengers	£90/hour	3 HR	£270
Limo: 8 passengers	£105/hour	3 HR	£315
Limo: 10 passengers	£125/hour	3 HR	£375
Limo Van: 6 passengers	£75/hour	3 HR	£225
Limo Bus: 18 passengers	£140/hour	3 HR	£560
Van: 14 passengers	£60/hour	3 HR	£240
Van Terra: 12 passengers	£80/hour	3 HR	£320
Mini Bus: 20 passengers	£85/hour	3 HR	£340
Mini Bus: 25 passengers	£90/hour	3 HR	£360
Mini Bus: 30 passengers	£95/hour	3 HR	£380

Mini Bus:	35 passengers	£100/hour	3 HR	£400
Coach:	55 passengers	£120/hour	4 HR	£600
Tour Guide		£55/hour	4 HR	£220
Greeter on site		£35/hour	4 HR	£140

The importance of taking care of guests cannot be underestimated. Small considerations will probably be remembered for years. Whether your clients provide a van, a line of yellow taxis, or a bus, the important point is to ensure the guests get home safely, especially those who have been drinking. Transport costs vary from region to region, but it is helpful if you can compare costs. Companies usually require 3-to-4-hour minimum services; therefore, bear this in mind when you are making a cost comparison. Ask the transport vendors whether their fees include fuel charges and gratuities. Some high-maintenance vehicle hire will include garage time fees for any servicing after their use. This usually applies to larger vehicles in which passengers will be drinking and eating. The Vehicle Table includes sample fee structures provided by Kristina Bowery of Reston Limo (2006). The costs will vary depending on the region but the above table offers general guidelines.

A well-prepared wedding consultant has a keen eye for detail and is always on the lookout for problems. Many months before a wedding, it is your job to check with local authorities on any street closures, especially if the wedding is to be held during a holiday weekend or in larger cities where special events can clog up traffic for many hours. Determine any potential transportation difficulties and leave enough time for you and your clients to discuss options. Check with local law enforcement and government to ensure there is nothing scheduled that might interfere with the wedding.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Hiring Transportation

- Know your couple's transportation preferences, determine exactly who needs transport, and create a transportation timeline.
- Know exactly how the couple, the bridal party, and the guests will be transported to the ceremony site, from the ceremony site to the reception, and then on to their final destinations.
- Prepare a timeline that is specific to the transportation.
- Make sure leave-taking from the ceremony and reception is done efficiently.
- Be aware of any restrictions or limitations with each vehicle type.
- Determine whether the transport company's fees include a fuel charge, gratuities and garage time.
- Confirm with the transportation company the directions to each location where the driver will be stopping.
- Obtain day-of phone numbers for the Transportation Company and drivers.
- Check with police and city government offices on street closures, parades, demonstrations, and other special events.
- Encourage your clients to pay the venue's parking fees for their guests.
- Secure transportation early if the wedding is during prom or graduation seasons.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *The Wedding Fairy's Big Day Breakdown: Planning for an Unforgettable Celebration, (2013)*, By The Wedding Fairy George Watts
- ✓ *Wedding Planning For Dummies, (2012)*, By Marcy Blum
- ✓ *The Wedding Planner's Big Day*, By Cara Colte